

藤まる

illustration H₂SO₄



明日、
ボクは死ぬ。

Tomorrow, I will die. You will revive.

キミは
生き返る。

You will re

text
illustration

Baidu 百度

電撃文庫

明日、
ボクは死ぬ。
Tomorrow, I will die. You will revive.
キミは
生き返る。



藤まる

Fujimaru

illustration H₂SO₄



Tomorrow, I will die.
You will revive.3



夢前 光
「2へへ。坂本くんてぶかった♡」

風城 隆行
「おまへはあの時の俺だ、坂本」

坂本 秋月
「いつもいつも振り回しやがって」

もぴいん
「……………」

木下 夢
「おにいちゃん……あんなせに渡さないでさ」

真田 霞
「今日だけは……坂本くんからしてほしいな」

香寺 美紗雪
「先輩、寒くないですか？美紗雪の体もくっつけてさしあげます」

CUT1

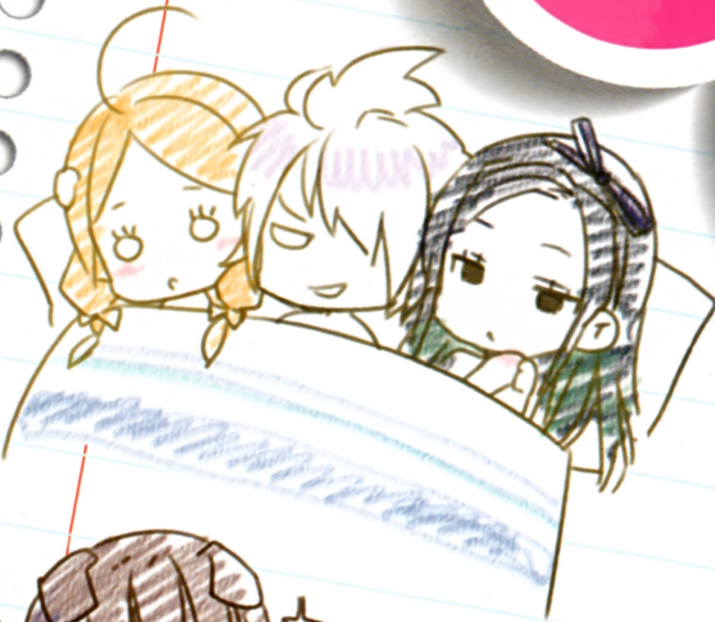
今日、俺は手紙を書く。
キミは編集長になる。 011

CUT2

今日、俺は電車に乗る。
彼はどこにいる？ 043

CUT3

今日、俺はミッションをこなす。
彼は何かを企んでいる。
073



CUT4

明日、彼女は死ぬ。
彼は生き返る。 155

CUT5

明日、ボクは死ぬ。
キミは生き返る。 219

CUT6

明日、俺は生きている。
キミを探すために。 285



PROLOGUE

“Are you willing to give up the rest of your life span to let her revive?”

“Ah?”

In the dark early morning, the rain noisily trickled down.

The pitch-black robes appeared just like a splatter of ink, and lingered hazily in my memories.

A piercing voice came from the other side of the phone, which did not suit that image.

“Use your death to let her revive, or let her fade away like this. Why don’t you choose the one you like.”

“What— —”

At the end only an ice-cold beeping was left echoing. I hadn’t thought of an answer, but the phone call had already been cut off.

“My entire life span...”

The sound of falling raindrops lingered in my mind.

The bad feeling that I couldn’t wipe away felt like it was continuously festering.

“How could this happen...”

Maybe I had already realized it by that point.

No matter how much I tried to deny it, or avoided looking at the problem, I couldn’t prevent what was going to happen sooner or later.

In the not too distant future, I would soon realize the true meaning of these words, as well as the cold, hard fact.

In a world where Hikari Yumesaki no longer existed — —

CUT 1 – TODAY I’M IN CHARGE OF WRITING A LETTER, AND YOU BECAME THE EDITOR

The cold season arrived, and it was a holiday in October.

“If you promise me that you won’t get angry, then I’ll tell you the truth.”

“Where did this come from?”

When I got out of bed and flipped open the shared diary, I found this sentence written in it. An ominous feeling struck me at full throttle.

“You have to solemnly swear, that no matter what you hear, you won’t get angry.”

“Alright, alright, I get it. What kind of trouble did you get into this time?”

It was probably just another stupid mishap of hers anyways.

“You swear you won’t get angry?”

“I swear I won’t get angry.”

“Are you sure? Are you sure?”

“Yes, yes.”

“If you do get angry, then I’ll reveal that [Hatsune Miku Striped Panties] search history on your computer.”

“I’ll definitely get angry if you reveal.”

Why would this idiot know about that? Please, just get to the point already.

“I think it was Monday? Kasumi invited me out, ‘Let’s go out on our day off.’ Sorry, I forgot to tell you.”

“Wait, is that all?”

My classmate, Kasumi.

She was a young maiden who possessed large-breasts, kept biting her tongue when she talked, and had her hair braided into pigtails. It looks like I have a date arranged with her.

“And then, since I have a very important promise that I must take care of on Sunday, I told her, ‘Then let’s meet up in front of the train station at 11 on Saturday!’”

Saturday. Isn’t that today?

So that’s what happened. Was she just worried because she didn’t tell me, and made an arrangement without my permission?

“But then, this is the important part.”

“Huh?”

This kind of trivial thing wasn’t that important — —I thought in that moment, but what came next was the important part.

“On Wednesday after school, I was enjoying a parfait at Cafe Moonleaf, and then Misaki said, ‘I want to go buy some clothes for my little brother on our day off, and I hope that you’ll come with me.’”

“Oh”

Misaki.

An underclassman who worked at the coffee shop named “Cafe Moonleaf”. She was a two-faced witch, who would use her extraordinarily beautiful legs to take advantage of men. So she too invited me out?

“So then, what about it?”

Feeling skeptical, I continued reading,

“Hikari here told her that Hikari would be busy on Sunday, but at that time, Hikari had forgotten that she’ve already arranged a date with Kasumi... and then Hikari told her... ‘Let’s meet up in front of the train station at 11 on Saturday!’”

“.....Huh?”

Ah, that previous ominous premonition that should be long gone, was coming back with full force.

“In other words, Kasumi and Misaki will both be waiting in front of the train station for Sakamoto at 11’o clock on Saturday, an extremely thrilling situation will happen in front of the train station. And so, now then, um...”

“.....”

“Uhm, as such...”

.....

“Do your best, boy ”

“STOP MESSING AROUND WITH MEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!”

I slammed the desk with both of my hands, and yelled towards the ceiling. This was the worst possible situation!!

“Hikari Yumesaki, look at what you’ve done now.”

I directed my complaint towards yesterday’s me, and after letting out a huge sigh, I looked towards the window, gazing at the blue sky, while also recalling another certain thought.

It must've been half a year already.

On a certain rainy day in the beginning of April, the young girl named Hikari Yumesaki died in front of me.

For some coincident reason, I was at the scene, and I was questioned by a mysterious figure wearing a long, black robe, "Will you share half of your lifespan with her?" I agreed to those conditions, and Hikari Yumesaki, who should've been dead, was revived.

As a result, well, Hikari Yumesaki would take control of my body every other day, reviving in this sense. Ever since then, we would rely on the exchange diary to communicate with each other.

However, the problem is...

"But don't you worry, all you have to do is tell them, 'My heart is big enough to take in both Kasumi's large breasts and Misaki's thighs!', and then you'll have a happy ending. Hikari's amazing to be able to think of such a good excuse!"

"Like Hell you're amazing!? What kind of two-timing, double sexual harassment phrase is that!?"

I continued raging towards the diary, and let out a painful groan. This idiot was still saying stupid things as usual.

Continuing on to the next page, she was still looking for excuses, "But the truth is, you're actually really happy, right?", and even included a group of illustrations after this sentence of me, with an evil grin, in bed embracing a completely naked Kasumi and Misaki in my arms, and I couldn't help but lightly click my tongue. You purposely double booked my dates!

...I was a little stunned, but honestly speaking, this much was still within the range of my expectations, and for me, it had already become a common occurrence. However, this way of life has recently encountered a new problem. This was because...

"Sakamoto, I'm really sorry. But you won't get angry, right? There shouldn't be any reason for you to get angry anyways."

"Hm..."

The entry emitted an ominous premonition, and I braced myself as I continued reading.

"Because Sakamoto is always such a tough guy, but for Hikari-chan... Kyaa! Kyaa! So you wanted to pet my head and hug me! Sakamoto is such a closet pervert!"

"Ugh... This idiot..."

Seeing those words, I could only tightly bite my lips, unable to say anything. The reason was simple, it was just as she wrote, because of some unfortunate accident, the incredibly top secret that I like... like... like Hikari Yumesaki was exposed. Afterwards, that idiot would use this piece of information to tease me every single day.

"What should I do~ Should I be his girlfriend~ But the thing is, if he wants to be my boyfriend, then he'll have to know that I don't like people who get angry over these kinds of small things~ Who knows what Sakamoto's response will be~ (stares)"

"Dammit, stop getting so full of yourself."

There were three choices below, *"Forgive/Not Forgive/Tsundere"* — — What does the last one even mean — — Dammit, give this idiot an inch and she'll

take a mile. I better steel my heart and scold her a bit. Steel my heart... steel my heart...

“.....”

After racking my brain for a while, I circled the word “Forgive”, and this action unsurprisingly made me feel dejected. It wasn’t like I was afraid of her hating me. It wasn’t like that... right.

“I’m always being dragged around on a leash by her.”

As such, I continued reading the ending of this incredibly long entry.

“I know for sure that Sakamoto will forgive me, so I’ll say good night for today! Don’t just mope around and yearn for me, but make sure to do your best for the day!”

Looking at that last line, I couldn’t help but retort, “It’s... It’s not like I’m yearning for you or anything.” and after playing the tsundere, I firmly closed the notebook. Aaahhh, I’m always being lead around in circles by her. Love is blind, just who came up with this phrase in the first place?

Ugh, even though at the end of the day I have to clean up for Hikari Yumesaki’s mess, the feelings of joy in my heart were also noticed by her.

“Sigh.”

I set the notebook down, and looked around the room.

My uniform was hanging from the clothes rack, my manga were arranged in the bookcase, the candy that was originally scattered around on the floor, everything was perfectly arranged nice and clean. It looks like she has slightly realized the the fact that she was a girl. So she has a cute side too after all.

However — —

“My entire life span huh...”

— — Are you willing to give up the rest of your life span to let her revive?

I suddenly recalled what had happened one morning a couple of days ago. I didn't know what these words meant, but it probably had something to do with the problem that we were struggling with.

The problem of Hikari Yumesaki's time — — being reduced by thirty minutes.

A long time passed since then, and for the moment, the reduced time remained at thirty minutes, no more, but who knows if it would still be like this in the future. Although Hikari Yumesaki pretended to not care, she was probably feeling afraid. Because of this, maybe I should tell her about the phone call from the black-clothed person...

“I can't say it.”

The vague words weren't nice in any way. I decided to try to avoid causing any chaos.

And so in the end, I still have yet to tell Hikari Yumesaki, nor find any solutions. “Just what kind of solution would work,” in the end, each time I could only reach this conclusion.

“...Let's just eat breakfast first.”

I may have been sweeping things under the rug. I also couldn't help but feel disgusted with myself.

Our life of two souls sharing one body may appear peaceful, but there was trouble hiding in the shadows. I remained frustrated with this fact, but

Hikari Yumesaki couldn't possibly feel at ease because of this. On this autumn day, I will obviously be drawn in another troublesome and more dangerous situation.

And so, two days later, such a situation quickly occurred.

"I lost my memories."

"You spent a passionate night with your girlfriend until you lost your memories? Now this is why you're a delinquent."

"I lost my memories..."

"Also, why are you not calling me Miss? Now this is why you're a delinquent."

"I lost... my memories..."

"Goodness me, why must you be born with such a terrifying face? Now this is — —"

"Memories... sob... sob..."

"Ah, Akitsuki, what's wrong? I'll pay close attention to what you have to say, so don't cry anymore."

Sunday had gone by, and during the lunch break on the Monday after, I came to the nurse's office, and I was crying manly tears in front of the school nurse, Higumo. The reason was because of the overlapping dates incident. Afterwards, I tried asking both of them to cancel the dates.

"I went to the beauty salon. It's definitely not because I'm about to go out with Senpai by the way."

First I received this text from Misaki, and immediately after came Kasumi.

“I’m really looking forward to our date. I can play until whenever, even until tomorrow morning...”

Getting this kind of text, how am I supposed to ask, “Can we move the date to a later time?” Furthermore, I didn’t want to pass up these chances for a date with a girl with big breasts and a girl with beautiful thighs, as any virgin male would hesitate when faced with a moment to act without restraint.

And so in the end, I took a risk, and thought up a battle plan to stall time.

“Sorry, since I have something to do afterwards, let’s just end at 4:00. I’ll make it up to you next time.”

Anyhow, first I’ll send this text to Misaki, and then for Kasumi.

“Sorry, since I have something to do beforehand, let’s meet up at 5:00, so I can stay with you until it gets really late.”

After sending the texts, I would meet up with Misaki in front of the train station, ride the train into town, eat lunch together, and pick out clothes for her younger brother. Eventually the time became 4:00, and so we would return to the front of the train station and say goodbye, and then I would meet up with Kasumi at 5:00 — — It was supposed to be a perfect plan.

But I was too naive. Kasumi was a very innocent and kind-hearted girl.

I had clearly changed the meetup time to 5:00, but the true and steady Kasumi unexpectedly came one hour early to the meeting place. As such, my plan was an utter failure, and so when I returned to the front of the train station with Misaki at 4:00, we bumped into Kasumi and I was caught red-handed.

“Eh? Didn’t you say that you would be busy in the afternoon beforehand, so you changed the meeting time to 5:00...?”

Kasumi said, and when Misaki heard this, she had a similar response.

“Eh? Didn’t you say that you would be busy later this evening, so you could only stay until 4:00...?”

As Misaki said this, my face grew more and more pale.

Countless seconds of silence went by, and it felt like it lasted an eternity.

““Oh.””

The two maidens spoke in unison, and then they each tightly grabbed onto my arms, one on the left and one on the right. Both of them wore a cold smile, and as they walked they would add in a “Heheheh” and a “Huhuhu”, dragging me into a karaoke room. Then at the same time, both of them raised their legs — —

“Sakamoto, hold onto the microphone♪”

“There’s a song that we want to sing for you, Senpai♪”

“Eh? ...Wha... What song?”

““Scream ””

And with those words, I immediately suffered two ferocious kicks directly below my hips, while also losing conscious. When I woke up, I discovered that I barely had any clothes on.

This pain apparently continued onto the next day, for written in this morning’s entry was, *“Sakamoto, your balls are screaming out, what happened? Don’t tell me that you spent all night with Kasumi and...”* and I

could only tearfully retort back into the diary, "It was the complete opposite, okay!? You idiot!" Dammit.

I endured all of the pain that I've suffered to this day, which still hasn't decreased, and ran back into the nurse's office like before. It's because if I had stayed in the classroom, Kasumi would keep showing me a scary look in her eyes.

"You boys have it rough too huh, but a crying Akitsuki is also quite cute. Hey, can I comfort you?"

"What the hell are you talking about..."

After I responded, Higumo looked like she was ready to rush forward and comfort me, so I inspected Higumo's appearance.

She had a tall, slender body figure, her black hair tied up into a ponytail, her well-rounded breasts bursting at the seams, and the thighs below her mini-skirt dazzlingly blinding. Anyone would rate it as a perfect body figure. If only her personality was more decent, then there would be nothing else to nitpick. It truly was a waste. What's more, she wears a scarf all year round, not taking it off even during summer vacation, which really surprised me.

These pointless thoughts cluttered my mind.

"Now that I think about it, Akitsuki, how has your condition been lately?"

"Huh, my condition?"

"Didn't you come crying to me in the spring about having multiple personalities? I'm asking about how your condition since then."

Higumo picked up her mug, talking as she walked towards the nearby coffee machine. Oh, that did seem to have happened.

I remembered back when Hikari Yumesaki had just entered my body, I was completely terrified by how I would lose my memories every other day. It looks like Higumo is still worried about that.

“You don’t have to worry about it anymore, I haven’t been losing my memory since then.”

“Is that so...alright then. I can finally be at ease.”

I casually brushed it aside, and Higumo easily accepted it.

It was because of this topic that I remembered another thing.

“Oh right, there was something that I wanted to consult with you.”

With her back turned towards me, Higumo turned her head towards me as she poured her coffee and responded with a “Hm?”, and so I asked a question that I have always been meaning to ask. Although it wasn’t anything important, I still had to ask about it.

“When I was struggling with my multiple personalities problem, you told me about that one case right?”

“Yes, that’s right. What about it?”

“‘When the alternate personality gradually appears more frequently than the original, the body may get taken over by the alternate personality.’ — that’s what you said, right?”

“.....Mhm.”

Higumo became quiet. Eh? What is it? Is there something wrong?

“Afterwards, I became more interested in multiple personality disorder, but I couldn’t find this kind of case anywhere. Do you remember when this case happened?”

This question didn't really have any significant meaning behind it, and I only brought it up because I was reminded of our previous conversation while we were talking. That's all it was supposed to be.

"....."

But I didn't know why Higumo was so stiff in place.

"Hello, sensei?"

"Eh? Oh, sorry. Uhm, you were asking...about that case?"

Higumo awkwardly moved about, turning around as she held onto her mug, with an embarrassed smile on her face.

"Uhm, sorry. I actually got it from an article talking about 'Very Similar Rumors'. I don't really have any reliable sources, so I can't really give you an appropriate answer."

"Oh, so it was just an urban legend huh?"

As I faced towards Higumo and responded, I let out a sigh, while also showing a dumbfounded expression. I had already thought that it would be this way. At that time, I was thrown around in chaos so I had blindly accepted it, but after I thought about it, it must've been some made-up rumor.

"I'm sorry about that. Did you take it to heart?"

"No. It's just that when I thought about this, I felt like asking is all."

Higumo was more apologetic and ashamed than I thought she would be, but just when I was about to return with a smile — —

"Ah, the bell rang."

The warning bell for the end of the lunch break rang at this moment. It's time to continue suffering Kasumi's silent contempt...

"Akitsuki."

I held onto that thought, and while dragging my heavy footsteps, prepared to leave the nurse's room.

"Good luck."

"Huh?"

Higumo spoke with a sweet, soothing voice. What does she mean?

"Ah, it's nothing. Now that I think about it, why don't you cut your hair?"

"If you take off your scarf, then I'll think about it."

"Ah, trying to pull a fast one here. Be sure to come again next time."

"I'm not coming back any time soon," and as I threw down those words, I closed the door and walked away. I better mentally prepare myself to get down on my knees.

I contemplated these things as I stride down the cold, empty hallway.

Five "I will never do it again"s.

Eight "I will be more careful next time"s.

Eleven "It was all my fault"s.

Nineteen "I'm sorry"s.

One "No matter what it is, I'll obey".

One "A virgin can dream too! He can make mistakes too (said with tears)!"

All the aforementioned things were from a cornered guy, who was willing to risk everything, thought up in an attempt to apologize. In the end, having successfully pacified Kasumi after much effort, I employed similar appeasement tactics against Misaki, and finally obtained her forgiveness. Anyhow, by the time I got home, I was completely exhausted. Ah, I'm so tired.

After resting for a while, I gathered up my strength, and put the paper and envelope that I had bought from the stationary store on my way home on my desk. This was because of what was written in today's diary entry.

"Your penpal, Miyamoto, has sent a letter you know. Sorry, but I sneaked a peek!"

"Miyamoto huh."

Because of a certain incident, when I was younger, a short-haired girl saved me from drowning, and that's Harumi Miyamoto. We've been friend ever since, and after we separated, we became penpals. This was the second time I've gotten a letter from her ever since I entered high school, and I didn't know how she was doing lately.

I had some feelings of nostalgia as I began to read the letter that was clamped into the notebook.

"Mr. Akitsuki, how are you? The air has been quite cool and pleasant lately.

I feel like the people around me are beginning to worry about their college entrance exams.

Has Mr. Akitsuki decided upon his future aspirations yet? I really hope you will tell me.

Please remember to return a letter. And also, I still remember about that promise you know.”

“Promise, huh.”

Once I finished reading the letter, I shifted my attention back towards Hikari Yumesaki’s notebook.

“You better remember to write back! Hikari-chan here will personally help you edit this time, just be sure to clamp the letter into the notebook after you finish writing it. I’ll need to check whether this virgin wrote anything unpleasant!”

“Why don’t you just mind your own damn business.”

I knit my eyebrows, and cursed at that self-conceited entry. Although, it looked like everything was fine, with a playfully mischievous journal entry just like always in the past. The problem was what came next.

“Now that I think about it, if I’m taking care of Sakamoto’s daily life like this, then I’m basically like a newly-wed wife! Sakamoto, look at you, you can’t hide that smile on your face~ ☆”

“Dammit... She’s always using that against me.”

It looks like Hikari Yumesaki still wasn’t tired of using my secret crush on her.

Following it were things like, *“What should I do~ Should I be his girlfriend~”* or *“I can’t feel like any dependability at all from Sakamoto~”* and other kinds of self-conceited stuff. Sakamoto here is completely fed up with it. There was even an illustration of a newly-wed wife included on the side. A Hikari Yumesaki wearing an apron was showing off a flirtatious look saying, *“Do you want a bath first? Or maybe*

dinner? Or perhaps brush your hair?". That last part, what do you mean by brushing my hair!?

"Although, Hikari Yumesaki as a wife huh."

I couldn't help but blush at these provocatively suggesting words, while also beginning to imagine it in my head.

I didn't know what a newly-married life would be like with that idiot. I'll probably just get fed up with her. However, ignoring that side of Hikari Yumesaki, she was honestly just a girl who was afraid of being alone. At night, I might be able to catch a glimpse of her tender and affectionate side. For example, after she takes a bath with a bathrobe draped over her body —

— — *Sakamoto, I probably won't be able to call you a virgin after today...*

— — Eh? Why?

— — *Because Hikari-chan is going to take away your virginity.*

(※At this moment, the bathrobe needs to flutter down. It's very important!)

— — H-Hikari Yumesaki!

— — Sakamoto, let's warm up a bit...

"H-Hikari Yumesaki, we can't! We're still kids, it's too early for us to do this kind of thing!"

But, but! If you really want to, then right now we can give birth to a son, two daughters, and become a happy family... Wait! Three children! Turning that around, the least would be — — AAAaaaaahhhhhhhhhh!

Following my burst of excitement, I laid down on the ground, and rubbed the floor for around 10 minutes. My little sister entered the room and

interrupted, "Brother, can I borrow some white glue... Oh... I see that I've disturbed you. I didn't think that you would be in the middle of lying on the floor. Make sure to be careful so you don't get white glue all over the floor..." Even though I've been subjected to such words, I didn't care at all. Ahhh, marriage huh... What a beautiful thought...

— — After wasting a huge amount of time, I finally recovered. With the piece of paper in front of me, I began to write.

"Uh, what should I write about."

At first, I was going to write something short and simple, but taking Hikari Yumesaki into consideration.

"Any girl would find this kind of letter boring! This is why you're still a virgin!"

She would definitely nitpick about it like this. But even so, even if I were to spice it up...

"It's pretty obvious that you're just pretending to be cool. This is why you're still a virgin!"

I guess no matter what, I'll still get chastised by her in the end.

"Whatever, I'll just try to look nice."

And so, I spent thirty minutes of effort trying to look nice.

"Dear Miss Harumi,

Long time no see, and thank you for sending me a letter, I was very happy to have received your letter.

College huh. Although I haven't spent much time thinking about this question, it's probably about time to face it.

If it's possible, I hope that I can attend the same university as you, so we can share a happy college experience together.

However, before that, I'll need to work hard to make it happen, haha (LOL).

But if it's for you, I'll feel more motivated to work hard. Yes, I'll try my best.

Well then, I'll just stop here for now. See you next time."

"This should do for now."

Surely even Hikari Yumesaki, who understood other girls' hearts, would approve of this letter. Yep, I did a good job.

After feeling a sense of satisfaction, I included, **"I'm done, so I'll leave it to you to edit."** and finally closed the notebook.

"Alright, let's do some homework."

And like that, I quickly and easily pushed this issue to the back of my mind, and returned to my normal life as a high school student.

...However, it turns out that I made a mistake at that moment.

Two days later, a heavy curtain would be drawn open on an unimaginable image of tragedy.

"Eh?"

Two days later on Wednesday, the image could be seen with a naked eye.

"My room is a mess."

I said as I looked around my bedroom.

My uniform was thrown on the ground, my manga was disordered, instant ramen was left unfinished, and the TV wasn't turned off. My room, which was only recently cleaned up, was quickly returned back into its memorable state.

"Why did this happen?"

In order to check the diary, I got out of bed, and flipped open the notebook. And then — —

"Wha... what is this...?"

A shiver ran through my spine.

The letter that I wrote two days ago was clamped inside the notebook.

No, it "was" the letter that I wrote — — that was the correct way to put it.

That letter was unrelentlessly marked over by a red pen, and I could clearly feel the marker's annoyance.

"'Miss Harumi', why would you refer to her as that? Are you messing around?"

'So we can spend a happy college life together' well isn't that subtle.

'Ha ha, (LOL)

'For you'... so even you can say those words huh.

What does this even..."

She left behind these kinds of comments. What? Why are you so mad at me?

"She's just being her usual self."

If it was some other guy friend (other than Kazeshiro) they would definitely scold her — — what the crap are you doing? Although this time, I'll just take a step back, since that idiot's impulsiveness isn't exactly a rare occasion.

As such, I stuffed both the notebook and the letter into my backpack, and headed towards school. It didn't matter if it was during class, during break, or after school, I would always be racking my brain on how to fix the letter, and the next thing I knew, it was already 11 o'clock at night.

"Dear Harumi,

Long time no see, and thank you for sending me a letter, I was very happy to have received your letter.

College huh. Although I haven't spent much time thinking about this question, it's probably about time to face it.

If it's possible, I hope that I can attend the same university as you, so we can share a happy college experience that only belongs to you and me.

However, before that, I'll need to work hard to make it happen, haha LMAO.

But I want to be with you, Harumi, so I'll feel more motivated to work hard. Yes, I'll try my best.

Well then, I'll just stop here for now. See you next time."

"I finished! It has to be perfect now!"

I completely revised the parts that Hikari Yumesaki marked for me. I think the reason why Hikari Yumesaki was angry is probably because I wasn't

being sincere enough. She's always getting mad and saying, "I can't feel any love coming from Sakamoto's entries!" anyway.

I stuck the revised letter in between the notebook pages, and thought that would be the end of it. Surely with this Hikari Yumesaki's mood will take a turn for the better.

...I carried this hope with me.

But it looks like I stepped on one of her landmines. Two days later, things took a turn for the worse.

"Whaaa..."

The following Friday, after I woke up, what entered my eyesight was still my mess of a room, and when I read the journal, I couldn't help but let out a cry.

"That's not what I meant! Sakamoto is an idiot! You dense male! This is why you're still a virgin!"

"Sigh, why is she still angry...?"

She continued complaining.

"So you would go this far to play with Hikari-chan's feeling... I can't believe it! I was so excited too! I've been tricked! Hmph!"

She left behind these words full of indignation.

"Why is she so mad..."

Although I felt an ache in my heart, it was useless to think about it. I dusted my uniform that was thrown onto the ground, and put it on. Sigh, this

situation has become quite troublesome, but I couldn't think of any way to resolve it.

In the end, I used "I'll think about it later" as my excuse and pushed the issue aside.

...I couldn't tell at that time just what kind of disastrous event would occur.

"Where is it... Where can it be... Sob..."

The time was 10 o'clock at night, the location was the changing room next to the bath. In order to not be seen by my little sister who was taking a bath, I was secretly looking through the panties that she had taken off with tears trickling from my eyes. Why? It's obviously because of Hikari Yumesaki. That idiot was so angry, that when I got to school this morning, her revenge was already unfolding.

The homework notebook that I was supposed to turn in had 18+ BDSM illustrations drawn on it, and this wasn't even the worse part. My desk was crammed full of moe manga, my gym shoes were decorated with Pr*tty Cure drawings, and there were even BL doujins that had textbook covers slipped over them.

"Sakamoto, please read aloud page 83 from the textbook."

"Yes. 'Yukio, we can't! Two guys holding each other in such a tight embrace...' 'Akiboshi, no one will see us. Come, bring your delicate skin into my savanna...' — What the hell is this!?"

This kind of massacre occurred.

Once I returned home, the troubles still weren't over. My mom had received a package sent from "me". "What could it be?" I carried that thought as I

watched from the side, and it turns out that there was a t-shirt inside with “Brother Sister Incest is Wincest” printed on it, and you can’t help but wonder where they even sell those at. There was even a letter included, which read, *“My dearest mother, please forgive this forbidden love.”* My mother turned ghastly pale, and a panic-stricken Yukiko stuttered, “Wha... What does this mean... Are you trying to tell me something...? Could it be that you want to declare our forbidden love to mom and dad!” and it costed me a lot of effort to settle and reassure those two.

As for why I’m now hiding in the changing room and playing with the panties that my little sister just took off, it’s because I was about to face an unprecedented crisis.

When I had just turned on my computer, there was a document on the desktop whose title read, “Time of Missile Launch: 00:00” and so I opened up it to inspect it...

“I’ve already set up an automatic email that will send shotacon BL to Kaoru Kinoshita. If you want to delete it, then you’ll have to figure out the password. I’ve secretly written the password on your little sister’s underwear.”

...and saw this utterly retarded advance notice for a crime.

Oi oi... I opened up my email box, and there really was an email. Using the automatic sending function, it was an email that would be sent to Kinoshita. But the most important part was...

“How long are you going to wait before you ambush me? I’m really looking forward to it. Hurry up and seize me already.”

...what was written.

“This is bad... This is bad...”

Seeing those disastrous words, a shiver suddenly ran through my spine, and even though I tried to delete the email, but then I discovered that because I lacked admin privileges, I couldn't delete it without the password, which destroyed my spirit.

And so, since I didn't have any other choice, I could only scrutinize Yukiko's underwear.

Yukiko was in the living room watching TV, so I took advantage of this opportunity to sneak into her room and go through her wardrobe... but I couldn't find anything.

My only option was to dump out all of the clothes in basket and look through them, but I was still unsuccessful. Because of it, I came to the conclusion that, “Maybe it's written on today's panties.” and so I returned to the living room. Yukiko, who was wearing a mini-skirt, sat on the sofa hugging her knees in an improper manner. I plopped down in front of her, and cautiously sneaked looks at her panties.

Where is it... Where is it written...!

— — But I couldn't focus on sneaking looks at her panties for long.

My dad who was reading the newspaper on the side increased his coughing speed, like he was trying to say something, and Yukiko was blushing as she pressed down her skirt, so I just gave up (although now that I think about it, my dad was technically witnessing an unbelievable scene of his son trying his best to sneak glances at his daughter's panties).

“It looks like I'll have to switch my target to Yukiko's freshly worn panties.”

No one can blame me for coming to this conclusion, right? That's why in the end, I was taking advantage of Yukiko being in the bathroom and sneaking around in the changing room.

"Just where is it written..."

After a series of events, now — —

I flipped over Yukiko's freshly worn panties, raised it high into the air, and brought my face closer to it, but I still couldn't find any words. Dammit, Yukiko's panties was the only connection to all of this!

However, only my mind was still calm and collected.

"Maybe the underwear wasn't her panties, but her bra..."

Upon realizing that, I grabbed ahold of the small-sized bra. Where, where is it — — Oh, I found it! Written on the inside of the bra was a small line of letters! This is great! Alright, now I have to quickly write it down — — Kathunk — — If I don't quickly write it down, Yukiko will.....eh? Kathunk?

"Sigh, the shampoo's all gone, I really need to remember to replenish — —"

" — — — — — — — — — — !"

In that instance, a moment of silence fell upon us. Although it may be little bit too late, right now allow me to introduce my little sister, Yukiko.

Having just entered middle school this spring, Yukiko was nothing like me. She had a small, delicate figure, and that sour look on her face was probably a plus for some people.

Okay, what is Yukiko actually seeing right now.



She was obviously completely naked from having taken a bath, and water was dripping down her smooth, glossy skin, fully showing just how delicate and supple her skin was.

Her two legs which extended down from her small, cute buttocks seemed to have forgotten how to walk, as I only saw her remain frozen in place. The small towel in her hands and the steam covered up her most important parts, but that was her only saving grace, for the person reflected in the large pupils of her eyes was her dearest older brother.

In my left hand was her panties, and in my right hand was her bra.

Because I was extremely nervous, I let out a laugh, and in an act of desperation, I brought my face closer and looked at her — —

“Yukiko, this is a misunderstanding. I have a reason for this that I can’t discuss.”

"~~~~~!"

"Listen, I just need to inspect your panties real quick."

“~~~~~!”

“It’s true! I have some difficulties that I can’t say and I need your freshly worn panties!”

~~~~~!"

“Yukiko! I have some difficulties that I can’t say but I must need your freshly worn panties — —”

“You hideously perverted virgin of a brother, hurry up and get out— — — —  
— — — — —!”

“Aahhh— — — — —!”

With an incredibly violent tackle to my stomach, I flew out of the changing room and completely fell down onto the floor. This is a misunderstanding... I only wanted to inspect your panties for a bit... Although I lost any valuable dignity I had as an older brother, I finally found the password. I was saved.

And so after I returned to my room, I entered the password "I\_Am\_A\_Virgin" (What kind of stupid password is this...) and finally deleted that email without a hitch. Sigh, I'm so tired.

"Not good, that idiot Hikari Yumesaki is really mad."

I thought back over what happened today, and grew worried. Dammit, what should I do?

Maybe I could follow Hikari Yumesaki's advice in fixing the letter. However, seeing how angry she is this time, I don't think this would be enough. But even so, casually apologizing would only make her angrier.

"...I really have no idea on what to do."

I tsked with a bitter expression on my face, and flipped open the notebook. Even though I really didn't want to write these words if possible, I couldn't take anymore of it.

"Please don't be angry anymore. Making you angry is only causing me pain. You know how I feel about you, right? I'm begging you to please tell me why you're mad. The one thing that I never want to feel is being hated by you, my beloved."

"....."

Although I wrote those words myself, looking at them still made me blush red in embarrassment. Eh? Do I really have to do this?

All things considered, Hikari Yumesaki has a kind and sweet personality, so if I write this honestly, she'll probably forgive me. But the thing is... Ugh~

After racking my brain for a while, I ended up erasing the ending "my beloved" part. This action would probably cause her to ridicule me as a virgin again, but it was really embarrassing. My cheeks were still burning red.

"Please don't be angry anymore."

I carried this plea in my heart, and got into bed to sleep and end this day.

Two days later, seeing my room and tidied up and cleaned, I couldn't help but let out an "oooo" in amazement, and then opened up the notebook. What entered my sight was a tiny handwriting that lacked any self-confidence.

*".....It's because the letter you wrote for Miyamoto sounded like you were writing to a girl you liked."*

"....."

Uh... What does this mean?

Although I didn't expected that letter would make her feel this way, what did this have to do with her being angry?

"Eh———"

As I pondered that, I continued reading the next line.

Once I saw those words, I couldn't speak for a moment.

*"I don't know why, but it leaves a bad taste in my mouth."*

“.....”

Eh? Uh... Does this mean that...

I immediately felt a smile grow on my face. Could it be that Hikari Yumesaki had a bad taste in her mouth because I was being friendly towards Miyamoto? In other words— —

“.....”

Crap, my smile won't stop growing.

“Heheh..... Heheheh.”

I even let out a disgusting laugh.

I don't know why but my mood became a lot better, and I threw myself onto my bed. And then, while holding onto Hikari Yumesaki's hug pillow, I laughed like an evil overlord for no less than ten minutes. My little sister entered the room at some point, “Brother, I'm sorry for ignoring you for all of yesterday..... Oh.... I see that I've disturbed you. I didn't think that you would be in the middle of humping your hug pillow... I'm sorry for getting angry at you over my insignificant panties...” and even though I've been subjected to such words, I didn't care at all. I was at the height of the moment. Banzai!

“What, she was only mad because of this?”

I smiled as I bowed my head and apologized to yesterday's me. Hikari Yumesaki, I'm really sorry.

Once I finished apologizing, I sat back into my chair, and laid back as far as I could.

I gazed up into the sky outside my window, and immersed myself into the dawn's light blue sky. Aahhhh, I feel so happy.

It must've been because I felt completely relaxed, but I suddenly spoke:

"...It's already been half a year, huh."

It's already been half a year ever since my strange encounter with Hikari Yumesaki. At the same time, I remembered something else related to this.

One morning — — I received a strange phone call, and words the person in the black robes said at that time.

".....My entire life span."

Hikari Yumesaki's time was reduced by thirty minutes, along with the meaning behind the black-robed figure's words.

Not only did this lend to what they meant, but it also hinted at what was to come, which the current me had no clue on. However...

"I really do hate not being able to do anything and just waiting like this."

I definitely don't want to lose Hikari Yumesaki like this. Furthermore — —

"I've already made a promise with Miss Hinako."

On the night of the fall equinox, under the light of the full moon, I made a vow to Hikari Yumesaki's mother, Miss Hinako.

I will definitely let Hikari Yumesaki revive, and definitely let her come see you.

".....Alright."

For some unknown reason, I felt strength course through my body.



Afterwards, I kept searching for a clue that would help allow Hikari Yumesaki to revive, but I couldn't find anything at all. But even so, I still shouldn't think about giving up. I definitely can't give up.

No matter what I must do, I must allow Hikari Yumesaki to revive.

"We'll definitely go see Ms. Hinako together."

There'll definitely be some solution, a solution that will allow Hikari Yumesaki to be saved.

So I prayed — —

And clenched my fist at the sun rising above the cloudy sky.

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## CUT 2 – TODAY, I TOOK THE TRAIN, BUT WHERE IS HE?

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“Neh neh, Sakamoto, I’m going to go boil some black tea, but you can’t go looking through my room while I’m busy.”

“Oh, yeah, of course. Kasumi.”

“A-and, even if it’s on accident, you absolutely can’t open the second drawer in my desk.”

“Okay, I got it, I absolutely won’t open it then.”

“Don’t open it... it’s filled with a girl’s secrets...”

“Alright...”

“You promised. This is a girl’s secret... A secret that would make Sakamoto pleasantly surprised...”

— — Klunk.

“.....”

Did you really want me to look that badly?

“This is serious now.”

I watched Kasumi leave the room, and then raised my head towards the ceiling.

Yes, on this day, I’ve unexpectedly came to Kasumi’s room.

It was about a week after I decided that I would revive Hikari Yumesaki. I did everything that I could to find a clue; browsing on the Internet, flipping

through the books at the library, searching for the mysterious black-robed person, and in many other ways.

And on this day, after school, I went to the library to flip through books, and accidentally bumped into Kasumi. At first, I only carelessly spoke a couple of words.

“Sakamoto, my house is near from here. Won’t you drop by to have some tea?”

“Eh? Uhm, but...”

“Don’t worry, you are more than welcome to come over.”

“Erm, no, well.”

“...Did you already forget about that double date incident?”

“!”

And just like, that I was whisked off to the Sanada house. I want to say that it was a rare opportunity — —but when I gave my answer, and saw her pump her right fist, I really hoped that it was just a figment of my imagination.

Anyhow, it’s cosy, but it’s still my first time paying a visit to a girl’s bedroom. Being in such a fortunate situation, I couldn’t help but feel like I was being tricked, especially since this room — —

**“Top Ten Secrets to Successfully Deceiving Guys”**

**“The Secret Techniques for Capturing Guys”**

**“Choose Carefully! How to Make Boys’ Heart Race by Acting Spoiled”**

**“Beginner’s Introduction for BDSM”**

“...Why does she have these books?”

There’s nothing else more terrifying. Also, there seemed to be something in the second drawer from the bottom.

But that’s when another problem came in.

“Excuse me. Sakamoto, stop it! You can’t be looking through Kasumi-chan’s room!”

Ack, here she is again.

“I-I wasn’t fishing for anything...”

As a certain someone entered the room with a mischievous smile, I instinctively answered back with a stiff expression.

That’s right, this person was Kasumi’s legendary (?) older sister who’s in college.

I did hear Kasumi mention that her older sister was home, and that person had been entering the room several times because her little sister had brought home a guy, and purposely teasing me. Right now, she’s sitting on the bed, leaning towards me — — ah, wait, why is she leaning so close — — Stop, stop! Don’t press your face so close! My face is about to turn red!

“Hey, what is your relationship with Kasumi-chan? Can you tell Onee-chan?”

“W-we’re just classmates...”

“Really~? But Onee-chan here knows that Kasumi-chan looks at a secret photo of you every night... Ah, I’ve said too much. Teehee☆.”

This person... No, more importantly.

Although I felt dumbstruck, I sized her up, and gulped. Wow... I guessed that she would be really pretty, but in all honesty, her beauty far surpassed my image of her.

I guess using the word “moe” would be the easiest way of describing her. The sleeves of her sweater loosely approached her hands in a seductive manner, the collarbone that was exposed from her clothes large collar exuded an incomparable sexiness. Her glittering hair was dazzlingly silky, and her nails and earrings were pretty. But there was also one noticeable trait that no one can ever forget.

“Come on, you’re not being honest here. Come now, tell Onee-chan.”

“Ugh...”

Some certain “objects” pressed close, and I felt hotter.

I don’t think I have to explain anything, just that she really was Kasumi’s older sister. The older sister’s was unexpectedly superior to her little sister’s “Super Big Boobs”!

That slightly soft sensation has been pressing against my arm for a while now. Stop, stop. I’m just a virgin, I’m just Bakatsuki, I really can’t take it much longer!

“Sorry for the long wait, Saka... Kyaah! Onee-chan, what are you doing?”

Woah, the power of a virgin I was born with swelled in my body, and the person who came to my rescue was none other than Kasumi. She hurriedly rushed over, and quickly yelled angrily at her own older sister.

“There’s nothing wrong here, right? Sakamoto is just an ordinary classmate from your class, right? However, Kasumi-chan, what’s this about hiding an ordinary classmate’s gym clothes.”



“Wh-wh-what are you talking about? U-Unbelievable! Get out!”

The agitated and moody Kasumi starting flailing punches at her older sister, but well, this scene was kinda something. Two sisters, standing next to each other, and the destructive powers of their breasts were overwhelming. And then, I must’ve misheard some shocking words, probably just me though.

Just when I was pondering this, those two began to whisper among themselves.

“(Now now, Kasumi-chan, I was just bringing you something. Did you bring him home with that in mind)?”

“(— —!? W-What are you saying, Onee-chan! I don’t need it! I already have some!)”

“(But you never used them... anyway, it’s not a bad thing to have more of them.)”

“(Argh! I’ve already said that I don’t need it!)”

Her older sister pulled out what looked like a small box (?), and they were both shoving it to each other. Ahhh, if the large breasts were to bump into each other in this kind of cramped space... I had a thought, and it turned out the way I expected. Kasumi was pushed by her older sister, and completely lost her balance.

“Ah, watch out!”

“Watch out!”

And then she fell towards me and the bed I was sitting on, so I hugged her out of reflex — —

“Ouch... S-Sorry, Sakamoto — — — —”

“Uh—————”

The situation took a turn for the worse.

If I had to explain, I was currently fully embracing Kasumi. Furthermore, since the force of that impact overcame my balance, I fell onto my back. And I didn't know why, but Kasumi was pressing down on my body, and that pair of impressive soft mounds evenly pressed down on my face. From an outside perspective, it looked like she was giving me a great service — —

“S-S-Sakamoto, I'm sorry! Are you alright? Sigh, Onee-chan, you're an idiot! That was dangerous!”

No no, Kasumi.

Why are those things pressing against me even as you say that, and why aren't you moving? The real question is, why are you hugging my head so firmly? Also, why am I able to see you giving a thumbs up to your sister with a smile from the corner of my eye? Eh? Her older sister is also giving her a big thumbs up?

As such, after going through this nerve-wrecking experience, it was already 8 o'clock by the time I realized.

“Why don't you stay for dinner?”

“You can also stay for the night too. We don't have enough rooms, so you can sleep in my room.”

“I'm sure something good will happen...”

Kasumi said, and it made it difficult for me to say that I wanted to go home, but I still firmly resolved myself to decline her kindness, and so she had no choice but to watch me leave from her front door.

“Do-do your best, Sakamoto.”

“Eh?”

Just when I got on my bike, Kasumi said those words to me.

“Although I’m not clear on what you’re up to...but you’ve been working quite hard lately, always coming in and out of the library, or hurrying home after school...”

“...Oh.”

“Even yesterday during break time, you were in the computer lab looking up things and shouting, ‘**As long as it’s for Mom, this kind of trouble is nothing!**’ ....”

.....That idiot.

“B-But, I still don’t think you should put on a black robe, and make ‘Kuhuhu’ sounds on the street. Play-acting a weird, suspicious person is fine and all, but I know that you were scolded by a policeman. What did you actually mean when you said, ‘**I want people to mistake us for accomplices, and now I’m waiting to be contacted!**’ ?”

.....That idiot!

“Um, anyway, I probably can’t help with anything... I’ll be cheering you on. Because I really like... seeing you working hard, Sakamoto.”

“Oh, thanks.”

“Really like”, was there any special meaning behind these words? I couldn’t tell, but just by seeing the smile on Kasumi’s face, I could feel strength well up inside me. I’m truly grateful to have known you.

“I’ll be going then, Kasumi. See you at school.”

“.....”

Huh? What’s wrong? Why do you look like you’re wanting something — —

“Give and take...”

“.....Oh.”

I reached out and patted her head. Although I’m not quite sure what happened, Hikari Yumesaki seems to have made a promise with Kasumi that whenever they would say goodbye, I would have to pat her head. Whatever, that idiot probably acted on an impulse again.

Kasumi narrowed her eyes and smiled, just like a small animal seeking love and attention, looking quite happy. Sigh, now that there was something “given”, something must be “taken’. I was curious, and fearful.

“I’ll work hard, definitely.”

The light blue moon and starlight adorned the indigo night sky, and looked brighter, more dazzling than usual.

I casually pedaled my bike, like I was swimming in water, and silently made a small promise to myself.

---

**“Hikari-chan just had a very amazing thought! You might have to start calling me a genius from now on!”**

“Yes, yes, so what is it, genius?”

Two days later, this was the first line written in the diary.

**“A clue to reviving... I thought of an amazing way to find this clue!”**

“Oh, something only a genius could come up with.”

In contrast, I muttered coldly. After all, she's the type of girl who went around on the street with a black robe draped over her. Honestly, she wasn't reliable at all, and she was the kind of idiot who even went online and searched, **"Black Robe WiOOpedia"**.

As I thought about these things, I continued reading without having any expectations — —

".....!"

I couldn't help but silently gasp, as if I was in the depths of an endless tunnel, and saw a glimpse of light.

"This method — — may work?"

Takayuki Kazeshiro.

A former classmate of Hikari Yumesaki, he was one of the few who knew about our personality switching phenomenon and a friend. He's prone to making mistakes, but he's quite cerebral. Having an unrequited love for Hikari Yumesaki, he was also my love rival.

*"We're going to increase awareness of the situation here?"*

After school, I made a call to that guy.

"Yeah. Through the internet and other methods, let's spread information about our current situation."

This was the proposal that Hikari Yumesaki had written in today's diary entry. The rest went something like this:

**"Let's start by spreading out information about switching personalities every other day!"**

We had been looking for clues all this time, but this was going about it in reverse. Putting it in another way, Hikari Yumesaki was proposing that we spread our personality switch story around the entire world, allowing the people who have information come forward themselves.

*“Does such a person even exist?”*

“I don’t know, but there’s no proof that they don’t exist, right?”

As Kazeshiro said, there was no proof other than us that there were other people who knew about a personality change incidence, but maybe, it could just be that we didn’t know about them.

*“But even so, how much are you guys planning to make this public? You’re not going to spread out personal information, right?”*

“Well, you’re right about that, but anyway, we got a draft written out. I just shared it with you, have a look.”

And then I waited for Kazeshiro to read the email.

*“‘A dead person revives by sharing a living body. What is needed for this to work? If you know the answer, please mail the address below.’ ...So that’s how it is. For someone who wouldn’t understand, they would think that this is a weird post. However, someone who would understand would probably understand.”*

“Mhm. If the answer is ‘One half of your life span’, bingo.”

The truth was that I wanted to reveal more stuff, but I wouldn’t know what would happen beyond that. In any case, I decided to just reveal minimalof information, allowing the other party to have enough to come to us.

Hikari Yumesaki most likely wanted me to openly praise her for coming up with this idea, since this was written in the diary:

**“Sure enough, in the end the one person you can always rely on is Hikari-chan! Sakamoto, pat my head! You have to brush your hair aside while blushing, like a tsundere! Just like Akiboshi from my favorite light novel!”**

Such words were written, and an illustration of Hikari Yumesaki with dog ears and a tail wagging back and forth, and who was looking forward to being praised, was drawn on the side. This idiot’s gotten drunk with success.

*“Alright, understood. I will also assist you. Now then, what should I do?”*

Just as my mind was wandering off, Kazeshiro asked me this. Oh, that’s right, the next part is the important part.

“I’ll be setting up an email address, so you spread that post around on all the social media websites you know. Every one of them!”

“Alright, got it.”

Maybe it was because he felt swayed by my high morale, but Kazeshiro replied back with a bit of energy.

And so, the two men ended this conversation, and immediately got down to work.

I was responsible for creating a free email address, and Kazeshiro was responsible for spreading the post around. For the time being, we tried a multifaceted approach, like social media, anime upload sites. Anyway, we posted it on every place we could think of.

“I’m begging you... please work...!”

Time quickly flew by while we were busy spreading the post around.



As for how our online responses went, we only got a lot of troll emails, which we basically disregarded. However, we obviously couldn't give up, so we continued spreading the post around.

"Hmm... Ah— —"

And so, around two weeks later.

At 4:29am, on a certain early morning, I woke up in front of the computer.

I felt a little tired, and it would appear that Hikari Yumesaki was up early searching around. It's rare to see that sleepyhead idiot wake up early.

The computer had traces left of that idiot's hard work, and entered into the search engine were the keywords **"multiple personality beautiful young girl"**. As usual, she forgot her original intent.

"Ah."

And then I noticed something. There were three not so nice looking rice balls on my desk, along with a cup of tea that was still warm. The journal on the side was opened up, and in there was a note left behind by that idiot.

**"Good morning, Sakamoto. Thank you for always trying your best, but please don't overexert yourself. Although I don't want to disappear like this, I really don't want Sakamoto to have a painful look on his face."**

"....."

Crap, I feel a tear in my eye. However, that was only for a short moment.

**"Heheh, lol, how was that? I tried donning the image of a proper wife; doesn't that maidenly? As expected of Hikari-chan! By the way, one of the rice balls has a pleasant surprise, so try and guess which one!"**

Those words completely dispelled the feeling I had a moment ago. That idiot never does anything seriously.

“Alright, let’s do my best. I need to at least meet that idiot’s expectations.”

I became filled with determination as I ate the rice balls.

Regret is the punishment for those who didn’t try their best. I forgot who it was that once said that short quote. I must save Hikari Yumesaki. I will definitely save her, no matter what I have to do — —

“.....”

...What the hell is this whipped cream rice ball?

---

*“Hey! Sakamoto, wake up!”*

“What is it this early in the morning...?”

A few days passed, and it was a certain freezing morning, almost winter.

As I was lazily sleeping, I was woken up by the ringtone, and Kazeshiro’s voice came out from my cellphone.

*“We finally got an answer yesterday! Look at this email!”*

“ — — — — — ! ”

I couldn’t move for a second. Could it be?

To be honest, I thought it was impossible. We couldn’t look for clues, no way anyone else would have realized. However, maybe. Finally,

To confirm the email, I hurriedly switched the computer on. I couldn’t wait for another second. I restlessly clicked the mouse, and opened up my email inbox.

There were two emails from an unfamiliar sender.

As I nervously held my breath, I opened the first email. The first line only had a brief sentence, and it was precisely the correct answer that we had desperately been looking for — —

**“It’s one half of their lifespan, right?”**

“ — — — — — Yes!”

Without thinking, I cried out, and clenched my fist.

We finally got it. I never thought there would be someone else who knew about the two minds in one body phenomenon.

*“Hikari notified me yesterday. And as promised, I entrusted her with ‘that document’.”*

“Ok, that’s fine. Thank you!”

“That document” was a reply email prepared in advance for when someone answered with proper news.

“I keep switching personalities with a dead person every other day. I’m looking for more information on this.”

Hikari Yumesaki sent this email yesterday afternoon at 5:11 PM, and the second email came at 5:20 PM. In other words, the second email contained the sender’s real identity.

“ .....!”

I gulped my throat, and clicked the mouse. And on the opened page was —  
—

**“Me too! I also switch personalities with someone every other day! I never thought that there would be someone else similar!”**

“Nice!”

This is great! There actually was someone else other than us!

I struck a victory pose, flipped open the notebook, and looked over the news that yesterday’s me left in there.

**“How’s that! Hikaru-chan is justice! Cute is justice! That means Hikari-chan is super cuttttee! You see! You see!!!”**

“Ah, yeah, you’re the cutest!”

I couldn’t help but yell, and from the cellphone came, *“Huh!? What are you saying!?”* That wasn’t meant for Kazeshiro, but whatever! Kazeshiro is super cute too! Crap! I can’t control myself anymore!

In the end, in order to calm myself down, I ended the call, and set off to wash my face off.

I ate some bread as I returned to my room, and went over the email again. It looks like that was all the email I received yesterday. The last email that Hikari Yumesaki received included, **“Please wait, even though I really want to talk with you, I need to discuss this with tomorrow’s me first. I’ll be sending an email.”** That was fine, we had to take the next step carefully anyway. Since we haven’t confirmed that the other person was on our side yet, we also couldn’t say that there was enough to obtain information on how to save Hikari Yumesaki.

After I calmed down a bit, I continued reading the diary entry. The first line read — — ah, that's right — — Hikari Yumesaki's request.

Hm, I was thinking the same.

**“Sakamoto, we finally found a clue. So, for what to do next... I want to meet with that person, and talk with him face to face. Although I don't know what kind of person he is, I also don't know if I can be saved or not, but I think that we can definitely find some way to take a step forward, and I must find this way or else. For Mama, for Kazeshiro, as well as for you... and for me.”**

“Of course, that's what I think too.”

Looking at the sender's writing style from the email, it's probably a guy. I don't know the exact details of his situation, but I should still meet with him at least once.

Once again, I pulled out my cellphone and made my second phone call of the morning to Kazeshiro. It seemed that Kazeshiro shared a similar view with me, and he wanted me to set up a meeting time and to not leak as much of our information as possible.

As such, after discussing with Kazeshiro, I began to write a reply email to that anonymous guy.

“Sorry for keep you waiting, I've been informed by yesterday's me on what has happened so far. There's a reason why we're looking for friends now. Actually, there's a problem with the switching time. To be exact, the time of switching for the person residing in my body living inside me got shorter, by thirty minutes. So, I have a suggestion. Can you come meet with me? I want to talk with you face-to-face, and discuss ways to resolve to our own problems. That's my request to you.”

“...Please... this has to work...!”

I waited for him to reply, and then I realized that he’s probably still asleep this early in the morning, so I reluctantly went back to bed. But of course, I couldn’t fall asleep like this, so I could only wait for the sun to rise, and proceed to go to school.

During class and during break, I anxiously checked my cellphone constantly to see if I had gotten a new email, but I never did get one. In the end, I didn’t receive a reply at all the entire day.

“I don’t know what their schedule is like.”

I switched with Hikari Yumesaki in the early morning of every other day.

Looking at the email, it seems that they also switch every other day, but I didn’t know the exact time. I received the email yesterday, so the sender must probably share the same schedule as Hikari Yumesaki. But even so, what is that guy’s other half doing? Was he waiting to discuss this with the counterpart tomorrow? If so, that other half will send an email to tomorrow’s me, and similarly, I’ll send an email to the sender’s partner...

.....

It might get tricky, so I decided to just go to sleep. I probably won’t get a reply today anyway.

And so, I wrote in the notebook, **“I didn’t receive a reply today, and it seems that the email will only come on your days. Talk it out with Kazeshiro before replying.”** and then I went to sleep.

With much restlessness, I awaited the day two days later, Sunday.

I was woken up by the morning alarm, the thought, “I have to read it!” took over. I quickly flipped open the notebook set beside the pillow, and looked over Hikari Yumesaki’s message. The first line read — —

**“We did it! Sakamoto! Good news! Thanks to Hikari-chan’s seduction techniques, they agreed to meet with us! Quickly head over to Kanagawa this afternoon! Remember to buy some watermelon from Miura for me!”**

“There aren’t any watermelons during this period, are there?”

— — Well, whatever. What is important is that Hikari Yumesaki succeeded in arranging a meeting with them. She’s unexpectedly capable!

**“But wait, Sakamoto! It seems that they have the most unexpected information! Maybe I really can be saved!”**

“Oi oi... don’t raise my hopes up so suddenly...”

I tried hard to resist quivering my lips. Come on computer, hurry up and turn on! I need to check my email!

After opening up my email, woah.... My inbox was crammed full of emails. It looks like the meeting was arranged because of this relentless emailing back and forth. Hikari Yumesaki, you’ve done well.

I got excited, and nonchalantly opened one of the emails sent to me.

Let’s hope that this can help change our future — —

**“So it’s really the same for you guys too? We’ve also been struggling because of a time reduction. However, seeing from what you guys have been doing, you don’t know of the ‘revival technique’.**



**Well, no problem! Let's meet and talk about everything that we know face to face. But sorry, can I have you come over to Kanagawa? Because of a certain reason, I can't travel far.**

**I'm looking forward to this. Let's get to know each other well, even though I don't know who you are, LOL.**

**By the way, my name is Hayato. Please take care of me!"**

The hour hand on the clock pointed towards 2.

Riding on the relatively empty train with my body shaking back and forth, I opened up the journal, and sorted out my thoughts again. It looks like Hikari Yumesaki had Kazeshiro come over yesterday, and they negotiated with the other party through several emails.

**"I originally wanted to talk about a lot of things with him through the emails, but Kazeshiro said that it was still too early to share personal information — — that we should wait until we meet first."**

Hmm, that would be the right way, since we don't know what will happen.

**"And then when we began talking about the meeting, they sounded like they wanted to meet right away, but then Kazeshiro said that we couldn't pick one of Hikari-chan's days..."**

I let out a bitter smile after seeing those words filled with unhappiness, and I applauded Kazeshiro's proper response.

**"But the thing is, they were really persistent on meeting today. But Kazeshiro wanted me to not give in no matter what... and then they gave in. We might've made things difficult for them."**

She was always so headstrong and playful, but it looks like she still takes note of weird things. However, we know that, from those words, they seem to prefer not to let “today’s them” come out and meet.

In other words, the time schedules should be like this — —

‘Hikari Yumesaki × Hayato’

‘Me × Hayato’s counterpart’

Hayato didn’t want to let his counterpart, A, come out and meet us. Looking at this, it appeared Hayato wanted to meet with us himself. If possible, the most ideal would be for Hayato and I to meet. Given the time frame, this wouldn’t work though. It appeared that I couldn’t receive Hayato’s replies during the given time, so that meant that I shared the same time as A. A in turn didn’t care about the mail. What was he up to?

Hikari Yumesaki too voiced some complains at the back end of the entry.

**“Isn’t Kazeshiro a bit overprotective? He was annoying me, so I said ‘you’re too noisy’, and that made him depressed. But he really is so annoying!”**

You better apologize to him, because he’s only worrying about you out of love.

**“And anyway, he said, ‘Just in case, you have to come alone,’ and then Kazeshrio said, ‘I want to come too.’ He was really annoying, so told him off, ‘You don’t have to go so far!’ You really don’t trust us at all! Hmph!”**

Kazeshiro...he’s just feeling anxious, you know?

On one hand, we have a rowdy girl who doesn’t play by logic, and on the other, we have a fake delinquent who just isn’t good at communicating. To

be honest, letting Mr. Cool Guy Kazeshiro go meet with them is the safest option.

**“In the end, we arranged a meeting with the other party. He said, ‘I’ll tell you through email, just message me when you arrive at the meeting place. I’ll tell my other half about this first.’ That’s why, Sakamoto, you have to do your best! Don’t use your fierce appearance to scare them, okay? As long as you give off a smile, and look like a hidden hottie, you should have more self-confidence!”**

“Even if you say so...”

To be honest, I don’t have the will to do that. I’m not good at talking with people during first meetings. Actually, my communication skills has always been poor.

But despite feeling gloomy, I still confirmed the meeting place again.

It was at a certain train station near the sea in the Kanagawa prefecture. That was the destination I was about to head to, and it was also the place they lived. It wasn’t near, but it wasn’t too far and inaccessible, so I guess it’s a silver lining. He mentioned in the mail that he couldn’t travel far due to certain reasons. What did he mean?

Anyway, after going through several hardships, we finally got to deciding a meeting with them, and they even knew a way to revive. For Hikari Yumesaki, I must ask them clearly about this topic.

“Although, there’s something I’m concerned about.”

However, the next part of the entry gave off a sense of unease.

Hmm, so here’s where the problem appeared.

It was an email that the other party sent, and written in there was something noticeable.

**“The thing is... my other half is a bit strange; not a bad person though. Anyway, just to note, the name’s ‘Chiaki’, and I hope you two can get along!”**

Chiaki.

Just as the person responsible for sending the emails, Hayato, said, it seems that the person I was about to meet was a strange person.

I hate this... I’m already bad at talking with other people. Now that I think about it, how old are they? And who is exactly residing in whose body? They could be different from us, and their split personalities are different ages. Sigh... I should’ve asked beforehand.

But there was also one more noticeable part in the email that Hayato sent. And that was — —

**“I’m looking forward to it.”**

Looking forward? Looking forward to what? Huh, I really don’t get it.

Hikari Yumesaki was also feeling worried about me, the socially awkward person who was going to the meeting.

**“Listen closely, the first impression is important. Sakamoto possesses a really fierce weapon in your appearance, a very powerful weapon. Scare her, and then go ‘Nice to meet you~♪ Yo, I’m Akitsuki Sakamoto’, this kind of gap moe will definitely make you popular! I’ve been using this strategy to make new friends up until now!”**

She left behind those words. How am I going to say “Yo ”,? If I met a fierce-looking delinquent who says “Yo ” to me, I would come up with a million excuses, just to try and think of a way to leave. Although, this idiot has used this method to make new friends up until now...

“...Whatever. Hikari Yumesaki,.”

I said as I grasped onto the other show of consideration from Hikari Yumesaki.

It was a small, handmade talisman from Hikari Yumesaki, for praying for victory and success. Embroided on it was “**Sakamoto the Boss**”. I held onto the talisman, and prayed from my heart. Alright, three more stations and I’ll have arrived. Got to succeed here.

I made my resolve in my heart, and looked straight out the window and into the white, foamy waves.

“I’ve arrived...”

After riding the train for about an hour, I arrived at a completely empty train station, which looked into the large, open sea.

It wasn’t a city, nor can it even be called a town, and it gave off a very shady feeling. Carrying a sense of excitement from visiting a new place, I first got off the railway platform. Alright, next comes the main part of the show.

“He said he wanted me to send him an email when I arrive right.”

I pulled up the draft that I had prepared beforehand, and got ready to send it to his inbox.

“I’m Sakamoto, the person who arranged to meet with you today. I’ve arrived at the train station, where are you?”

“Send!”

I silently shouted out loud, and sent the email. Ahhhh, I’m feeling so nervous right now, don’t get butterflies now... I really hope they’re not a scary person...although I don’t have the right to say that about others.

Maybe because I was nervous, but memories of everything that’s happened flooded my thoughts. I haven’t told anyone before, but because I wanted a friend, I’ve used a SNS site in the past before. I happily exchanged emails through the website with a girl who I was quite friendly with, and one day she said, “I want to see what you look like~”, and I thought, “Now that we’re so friendly with each other, she must be a nice girl, there shouldn’t be any problems.” so I squeezed out a smile and sent a picture of it to her, but then she blocked my emails. Why did I have to remember this now? Crap, now I want to go home.

I tried hard to hold back the faint tears that were leaking out — —

“It’s here!”

From the vibrations of my cellphone, I knew I had received an email.

My heart raced as the sound grew louder and louder, and a sense of anxiety engulfed me from all sides. I gathered up my courage and opened the email — —

“I’m waiting for you. I’m the high school boy wearing light blue uniform and a red tie, with hair dyed coffee brown, and carrying a white gym bag. I’m at the south entrance near the taxi cabs, so why don’t you come find me.”

“.....Sigh.”

I didn't know why but I let out a long sigh that had been held in for a while.

High school student. It looks like Hayato and Chiaki were at least close to the same age as us. It was Sunday and yet they were wearing their uniform and carrying a gym bag, they might have been at a club activity.

I put my cellphone back, and looked around. A light blue uniform, right? And then — —

“There!”

I noticed by the taxicab exit there was a high school boy who was busying playing on his phone. A light blue uniform, coffee brown hair, and a white gym bag. There was no mistake, that guy was Chiaki.

Gulp — — I gulped my throat, and took another deep breath for the who knows how many times of the day.

Although I felt a bit unsteady, but in the end, he was still just a high school student, a common one too. Just from looking at him, he has a mild appearance. He probably gets treated well. Really, how lucky of him.

“Alright, let's go.”

I took a step forward, and thought back to the smile and the lines that I had practised countless times in my head — — But then, Chiaki sent an email, almost as if she wanted to cripple my resolve. Eh? What is it?

“Subject: Oh and, just in case, you have to say the secret code”

“Huh, so that's what it is.”

This was honestly a safe method. Then what's the secret code I have to say? I checked the inside content of the email for a second.

“The secret code is, ‘Wow you're so cute, you're just my type.’”



“.....”

Huh?

Eh... W-What the hell is this person saying? That's the secret code, right? C-Cute?

“.....”

Sigh, even though this unusually strange secret code is unmistakable, the thing is...never mind.

I remembered that Hayato said something about being “strange” before, but to this degree — — I encouraged myself, and took another step forward. Don't be scared! Gather up your courage!

And then I finally reached him.

“E-Excuse me!”

“...Yes?”

I accidentally spoke with a cracked voice, which made it hard for me to talk, but I still gathered up my courage and talked to Chiaki.

It was probably because he was suddenly being talked to by a taller-than-180 cm, fierce-looking delinquent, but I could only see a stunned look on his face. Alright, say it, gather up your courage — — get ready!

“W-Wow, you're so cute! You're just my type! Ahaha!”

“.....Huh?”

.....

...Eh? W-Why do you look so confused?

Eh? Why are you trembling with such a ghastly pale face — — Eh? What's wrong? Eh?

Just as I was being confused, a high school girl who was standing nearby talking on her cellphone charged over.

“Hey! What are you saying to my boyfriend! Having that kind of taste is gross!”

Huh! T-Taste? Eh — —

“No, I-I'm just saying the secret code — —”

“Huh? What are you saying? I don't understand at all! Let's leave, Tetsu-kun. This guy is dangerous!”

Ignoring my bewilderment, the high school girl finished talking so furiously, and dragged away the pale-faced, body-trembling Chiaki — — No, no, wait!

“Hey, wait a minute! Why are you running away!?”

“Hey — — don't touch Tetsu-kun! Just what do you want!?”

No, no! I was just following the instructions and saying the secret code!

Maybe it was because I had fallen into confusion, but I couldn't help but blurt out:

“Wait! I've always wanted to see you! Do you have any idea how long I've longed to meet you? Can't we talk? Hey — — I'll treat you gently! So let's spend some time together — — Oh”

In a second, the trembling Chiaki had tears drop from his eyes.

The girlfriend beautifully threw a fist into my face, and immediately followed up with some scorn.

“Are you retarded!? How gross! You’re disgusting! Go kill yourself! Don’t let me ever see your face again!”

After she finished yelling at me, she dragged away the frightened and limp Chiaki and they swifly left, leaving behind my dumbfounded self, along with the suspicious glances from the passing people...

Eh? Huh... what happened — —

“I didn’t think you would actually follow through. That humorous image of you made me quite amused.”

“ — — — — Wha!”

A stunning voice suddenly came from behind me.

Although her words were harshly cold, the sound of her voice was clearly beautiful.

I subconsciously turned around. Could it be — — I held onto a hope.

**“The thing is... my other half is a bit strange.”**

I thought back to what Hayato had mentioned. In the next moment, I completely understood what he meant.

“Nice to meet you, Sakamoto. I am the Chiaki Tsukimura who arranged to meet with you today.”

“Eh — — — — —”

She had completely exceeded my expectations.

An earbud in her right ear, and a beautiful, red wheelchair.

However, what really caught my attention was — —

“You’re.....Chiaki.....-chan?”

A frigid autumn wind blew past the wheelchair, and her long, straight hair swayed along with it.

An incomparably cold voice and a pair of deeply profound eyes, one glance was enough to capture how pretty she was.

What reflected in my eyes was a strangely beautiful young girl.

## CUT 3 – I WANT TO FINISH THE MISSION BY TODAY, BUT WHAT IS HE PLOTTING

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There was a public library situated not too far away from the train station.

The building that was located next to it was a conversation room. There were tables and chairs laid out at a corner in a neat and clean manner. Probably because there weren't many people around us, there existed a silent atmosphere between us. At that point, we just remained seated there, while letting the silence take over.

A little earlier — —

After having gone through that shocking encounter, we finally met up with each other.

“Why did you have to pull such a ridiculous prank?”, Although I had really wanted to protest, the sudden shock easily doused my rage. Chiaki had conveniently changed the topic, “It's too noisy here, let's go somewhere else first.” and so I obeyed her and left.

I had originally wanted to seize that opportunity to chat with her...

“Can you please wait until we get there? Moving this wheelchair while talking to you is quite difficult.”

She used her cold voice to flatly decline me. And when I tried to help push her wheelchair — —

“Don't trouble yourself.”

She harshly denied me. You don't have to be a Debbie Downer.

Having endured that awkward silence, we finally arrived at our destination. After having ensured that her wheelchair was properly secured, I sat down in the chair across her. Alright, let's think carefully about what I should be doing next. Should I say something funny? That kind of thing is something tomorrow's me would be good at.

Just as I was thinking about these trivial matters.

"Now then, would you please bring out some proof?"

"Eh?"

"Proof. That's what I was told earlier."

"Y-Yes, that's right."

The young lady suddenly directed those words at me. She spoke without an ounce of emotion, without wavering, all the while looking right at me. If I remember correctly, Hikari Yumesaki's diary entry did mention something about this.

"All I have is... this."

I pulled out the Exchange Diary #1 and placed it on the gleaming table.

"Allow me to have a look."

I observed her quietly as she used her incredibly slender fingers to pick up the notebook, and thought back to another thing.

**"There's something that you should take with you, something that'll prove your personality switch! This is all that I'm asking you to do!"**

The day prior, Hayato had sent that email to me. In order to ensure that I wasn't lying, I had to show some evidence. So, that was a certain requirement.

However the problem was that, I couldn't find anything that could be used as proof. At first, It was supposed to be someone Hikari Yumesaki knew before she died, but convincing a complete stranger was rather difficult. After racking my brain for a while, I pulled out the first exchange journal which we had finished and no longer used. However, it was a little weird to say that this could be used as proof.

"Is this an exchange journal?"

"Yep, the left side is me, the right side is the other me, Hikari Yumesaki, what both of us wrote."

"I see. So this was how you communicated."

"Is there some other way?"

She pulled out a certain object from the pocket of her jacket, her eyes were still devoid of emotions. It was a recording device with earphones attached. Ohh, so there was also this method.

"Please wait a moment."

She spoke tersely , and started to read the journal.

Ugh...I was mentally prepared for this, but it was still quite embarrassing...

Even though there was no other option, I was still very unwilling to let others read that exchange journal. After all, it contained stupid words like 'virgin' and 'cow'. In fact, the real reason for Hikari Yumesaki's death was written at the end of the journal, because of her fujoshi tendencies, and this startling eye-opener left Kazeshiro dumbfounded, who even yelled out, "What the hell!"



Because of these reasons, every time she flipped the page, I couldn't help but break out in cold sweat, so in order to divert my attention, I began to size her up.

Her age—was probably similar to mine. Her hair looked soft and supple, her body seemed nice and slender, and extending out from her mature-looking clothes were delicate fingers that looked like they would easily break. However, what captured my attention the most was definitely her face.

*(She really is a stunning beauty...)*

Long eyelashes embellished her ice-cold eyes, and her small lips left you wondering how her smile would look like, truly breathtaking.

Kasumi-chan, Misaki, as well as Hikari Yumesaki; I could say that I was familiar with cute girls, but it was rare to have been able to see a girl as beautiful as this. In fact, I felt that she gave off the vibe of a queen, popular within a certain group of people. Alright, from now on, your nickname would be "Your Highness." But if I were to say that, I would probably be killed.

Just as I was letting my thoughts wander, the eyes that were filled with intent looked at me.

"Looking at your journal, it looks like your other half is a female."

"Mm, you're talking about Hikari Yumesaki, right? She's a second-year high school student, like me."

"So this means that you're the owner huh."

Owner? Did she mean the person who owns this body?

“That’s right. Hikari Yumesaki passed away in the first week of April this year. At the same time that happened, Hikari Yumesaki’s soul had transferred to my body, Akitsuki Sakamoto’s. From then onwards, we switch personalities every other day. You can think of it that way.”

“...Can you tell me more about your circumstances?”

She spoke in a professional manner. “O-Okay.” I replied at once, I felt slightly nervous as I continued the explanation.

On a certain rainy day in April, Hikari Yumesaki died because of a foolish reason right in front of me. And then a mysterious person wearing a black robe appeared in front of me, asking if I would give up half my lifespan. As a result, Hikari Yumesaki’s soul was transferred into my body. Every morning at 4:59 AM, we would switch personalities, and we went on with our chaotic, everyday life. However — —

“One day, the time I switched with Hikari Yumesaki was early by five minutes...and now it’s normally thirty minutes earlier.”

“.....So you’re just like us?”

Like us, in other words.

“I never thought that there would actually be others like us...”

Chiaki said that, then closed the journal, and carefully placed it on the table. She gazed coldly into my eyes, it felt almost as if she was saying,

“Politeness? What’s that?” and continued speaking with an apathetic voice:

“Allow me to explain myself, My name is Chiaki Tsukimura. Five months ago in May, just like you, I found myself switching personalities.”

May. Hikari Yumesaki passed away on April 8th, so they’re our juniors by about a month?

“It all started because my childhood friend — — Hayato Hyuuga passed away.”

Her long eyelashes hanged down as she explained. So it seems that Chiaki was the host, and every other day Hayato would occupy her body huh? Having looked at their gender, she shouldn't have been lying.

“Why did he pass away?”

“.....”

Ah, crap, I asked it too directly.

I didn't even mean it, but the silent pressure had forced me to shut my mouth, and I gave up on asking further.

“At that time too, there was also a person in black robes who appeared in front of me, who told me, ‘How about you use half of your lifespan to save him — —?’”

...Exact same line. I had also encountered a black robed bastard on that rainy day — —

“As a result, Hayato resided in my body, and then we became just like you, switching personalities every other day. Although, we started switching every morning at 4:54 AM.”

“.....Eh?”

54?

“Not 4.59 AM?”

“It's definitely 4.54 AM. Five minutes earlier than you.”

Ah...so in other words, the time Chiaki and Hayato switch places was earlier than ours by five minutes. So this meant that—

“Just—”

While my mind had wandered off, Chiaki flatly interrupted my thoughts.

“Like you, the time I switch with Hayato has become earlier. While the time Hayato switches into me remains at 4.54 AM, the time I switch with Hayato—”

“...Has shortened by 30 minutes?”

“That’s the case.”

...As expected.

“After about 3 months into this switching of personalities, we realized this. By that time, it had already decreased by five minutes. Later on, when we realized it, it was already shortened by 30 minutes. Thus, the current time I switch places with Hayato is 4.24 AM.”

After that, Chiaki remained silent, and I used that timing to sort out my mind. First, timeframe wise, the ones who could meet were,

“Chiaki and me.”

“Hikari Yumesaki and Hayato.”

No doubt about that.

After that, it was the time when the personalities switched. Chiaki and I would spend the day, and go to sleep at night. So first, at 4.54 AM, Hayato would swap places with Chiaki, and 5 minutes later, at 4.59AM, Hikari Yumesaki would switch with me. In other words, I would only get five minutes to meet Hayato.

After that, analyzing the time we switched into Hayato and Hikari Yumesaki. They spend a day, sleep at night, and the next morning, because the time's shortened by thirty minutes, Chiaki would swap with Hayato at 4.24 AM. Five minutes later, I would swap with Hikari Yumesaki at 4.29 AM. Thus, the time Hikari Yumesaki and Chiaki would meet was about five minutes. Damn it, it would have been best if Hayato and I were to talk to each other directly, but the conditions were unfavorable.

While I was pondering and sorting out my thoughts, Chiaki continued on, "Once we knew about this, Hayato got anxious and started to look around for clues. My body's a failure though, so I can't move as I wish.":

Failure—she calmly stated emphasized this term that was filled with bitterness. It probably had something to do with why she could only remain on the wheelchair.

Leaving this aside, I didn't know Hayato, but anyone would feel anxious about this. Just a decrease of five minutes left Hikari Yumesaki in madness.

"So Hayato finally found us."

"That's the case. He seems rather happy, saying that he didn't expect there to be someone like us. This might solve all the issues we have—or something like that. Actually, nothing can be sorted out."

Chiaki said such cold, heartless words. Such a cold person...well, she's right.

But I supposed I got the gist of things. In the early stages, Hayato did everything and looked into every piece of information. We started a little later, and there was a short time between the information we gave out and the time Hayato found it, probably because Hayato kept looking. In this

sense, we're really lucky. We really had to thank our lucky stars that he kept looking without giving up.

However, there was some things I was really suspicious about.

"Hey, can I ask about something?"

"Sure."

With the icy eyes staring right at me, I lowered my voice, and asked,

"Do you-know the method to revive Hayato?"

"....."

This was the biggest reason as to why we came here. Hayato said that he knew how to revive. However, why didn't Hayato revive? They continued to live the life of swapping personalities every day. It's thanks to this that we managed to know them, but it did seem weird.

I wanted to know the answer. I stared intently at the lips of Chiaki's icy face.

"This..."

This.

"I can't tell you."

"Ehh!?"

I nearly fell over. Hey-what does this mean?

"I do know everything about this method. However, I was instructed by Hayato not to say anything. He's a smart one, so he definitely has some ideas. I got two missions for the day, one is to exchange information. The other--"

Saying till here, she paused, and stared intently at me.

"You may choose...whether to believe it or not."

Don't say such spiteful words with a sharp look...

"To be honest, I was shocked when Hayato suddenly told me to meet you. Couldn't he meet you and see what's going on by himself? He always likes to do such selfish things."

The icy expression was showing a hint of displeasure.

Ah, eh? She's not on good terms with Hayato?

"He's curious as to what kind of person it is. A kid, old man, guy, girl..."

I glanced aside at her.

"-He's a decent guy, right?"

She kept sizing me up, and clearly, her eyes were as frigid as the howling blizzard; I was completely nervous. Ugh...what's with this pressure...

"That's quite a barbaric looking hairstyle. Is it common nowadays? When meeting people for the first time, you should at least tidy up your appearance."

"Ugh..."

She's right, and I couldn't help but shrink back. If my hair's too short, I wouldn't be able to cover my face though. I hated it...

"Also, don't you find yourself uncouth for putting your hands in your pocket and slouching as you walk?"

"Ah..."

"You murmur a lot as you talk. Speak clearly."

"So-sorry..."

“Also, ease up on your facial expression as much as possible. It is unpleasant to be glared at by you.”

“I’m sorry...I was born with this face!”

My bad for having such a shocking face!

“...I see. That was rude, I suppose.”

She apologized proudly, clearly not sounding like she had any intention to apologize. Damn it...she’s so arrogant in her speech. Anyway, you were the one who played such a rude prank on me.

The awkward atmosphere kept lowering my HP value. Chiaki suddenly sighed, “Whatever”, and gave such a look, saying,

“Then, please listen to this.”

Saying that, she placed that thing on the table.

“Hm? A voice recorder?”

“As I had said, Hayato told me not to say anything. If you are to be trusted, I am to hand this over to you—so he requested.”

It seemed that through that conversation, I had gained her trust. Which part did I gain her trust in?

“I don’t know what he’s planning. To be honest, I have no interest at all. However, I don’t know what he is planning to use my body for, so I can only assist him.”

Chiaki noted with a stiff tone. Hm, seemed like they were on bad terms.



“Don’t be mistaken. I do not trust you. It’s simply that I don’t want to start anything troublesome and get complains from Hayato. Also, I have no interest in your objectives at all.”

“Heh eh, is that so~...”

She’s really vile tongued there.

“File 1 contains the message I left for Hayato. File 2 contains the message Hayato left for me. What’s for you to hear is in file 3. That contains the message Hayato has for you. Don’t mess it up.”

So they communicate this way. Well, it works.

“Then, please listen.”

She prompted me, and I put the earphone of the voice recorder (it’s a really old earphone...). Now then, here starts the important part.

This Chiaki just did whatever she wants, and was unreliable. Even I did not want to continue talk. Thus, I probably should pine my hopes on Hayato. Right, leaving Chiaki aside, the main thing’s to consider being friends with Hayato. It’s a little too much for me to be friends with such a girl.

With much expectation, I opened file 3. There was a mechanical creaking– and the playback started. The static rang at my ear, and then, as though trying to scatter it–

“Yahoooooooo!!! Hello there!? Congratulations on passing your first test!!!!”

“Argh, what is this!?”

A sudden loud voice rang in my ear, and I hurriedly removed the earphone. Trying to shock me or what?

“Nice to meet you! If you’re hearing this now, it means you’ve gained Chiaki’s approval. Congratulations! Clap clap clap clap! I’m Hayato Hyuuga, the Chiaki Tsukimura tomorrow. Just call me Hayato! Please take care of me!!”

“Haa...”

I heard Chiaki’s voice from the earphone, but the emotion within was vastly different. Erm? That one I know’s the same too. Are the dead always this lively?

“Let’s get straight to the point. You’re troubled that your buddy’s time is getting shorter, right?”

“-!”

Yeah, that’s it. I came here to solve this.

“I did mention in the email that I know the way to solve this. However, there’s a problem with the process. I need your help to make this happen.”

“...I see.”

So that’s how it was. Hayato knew, but couldn’t do it, and did not. That made sense. So, while looking for clues, Hayato found us.

“I’ll tell you the method. If what I got is correct, it should be able to settle the issue of the time shortening. Of course, you do want to know, right? Right?”

Of course. It’s because of this—

“But! There are conditions before I can tell you this—!!”

“—Huh? Conditions?”

“I’ll give you five missions! Once you’re done with them all, I’ll tell you. This makes it interesting now, right? Teeheee!”

.....

“Huuuuhhhh!?”

No no! What are you doing at this time...tell me already!

“But, well. I guess I’ll use my way to see if you’re reliable. So, I’m really sorry, but please play along. Now then, mission one! First ‘be friends with Chiaki!’. It’s simple right? Then, do your best-♪”

“W-wa-”

Tuu-

And so the voice recorder stopped here.

“Huh...?”

Eh, eh, what’s going on?

I cast aside my agitated feelings, and was left stunned. Hold on, this guy’s way beyond my expectations. Till this morning, I was wondering if the other party’s really kind and earnest. I thought they would continue to support each other, and work hard...

I glanced aside at Chiaki.

“What is it?”

One of them was a girl with a sharpened blade-like stare.

I looked at the voice recorder that had completed its mission and quiet down.

The other was a bastard who's basically a genderbent version of Hikari Yumesaki.

"Is he for real..."

"What is it? If you are done hearing, please return it."

"...You heard this message?"

"Yes. Just in case. So what?"

"No, well, he asked me to be friends with you..."

"...My apologies, but I have no intention of doing so."

"Eh?"

"I do not wish to repeat myself. Due to a certain reason, I have decided not to make friends."

She immediately cut off my hopes.

Ah, I see. So mission failed.

.....No no.

"Just an advice. It is better for you to not interact much with Hayato. He loves doing strange things. What is he planning here?"

Saying this, she took out a pocket book from the bag of her wheelchair, and opened it before me, starting to read. She's completely ignoring me here. For real?

"And one last thing."

While I had such a thought, she opened her precious mouth again. Eh, last declaration? We just met.

“Leave this notebook with me.”

“Huh!? Why!?”

My precious!!!

“At the very least, I’ll have Hayato read through this.”

“Eh...”

I let out a displeased tone, but Chiaki zoned me out as though the conversation had ended.

“...The future sure looks bleak.”

*“So how?”*

“I’m thoroughly defeated.”

That night, Kazeshiro gave me a call out of worry, and I explained the situation to him.

After that, I continued to sit before Chiaki for about an hour, but her attitude was scarily cold. Even I was starting to wondering ‘even a crawling insect would have smiled or something’?

Even when I tried talking to her.

“I see.” “That’s amazing.”

She merely said those words. Finally, I could not bear this overly heavy atmosphere, and bade farewell, saying, “That’ll be all from me today...” I left dejectedly. I never thought we would be such loggerheads.

*“Why is Chiaki sitting on a wheelchair? Bone fracture?”*

"I never asked at all."

*"...Sakamoto."*

"I can't do anything about that! She was literally zoning me out!"

How was I supposed to ask, "You fractured a bone? Does it hurt?"

*"So, you never asked anything about the reason why she's sitting on the wheelchair, what Hayato's planning, and how to revive Hikari."*

"Sorry..."

Kazeshiro asked chidingly, and I could only apologize. However, that queen's really hard to conquer. That's not a character to be conquered. Where's the add-on patch!? Where do I download it damn it!?

"Well, I'll just keep working at it. We got no other clues other than them."

*"I guess. If anything happens, call me immediately. I'll help."*

"Yeah."

Saying that, I hung up the phone.

"Ahhh..."

I collapsed head first into the bed. Damn it, I thought I found a compatriot, but something unexpected happened. Hikari Yumesaki and I are the normal one when compared to those two."

"I got nothing. Think of an idea for me, Hikari Yumesaki."

I put down the cellphone, flipped through the notebook, and practically prayed.

To be honest, it's impossible for me to be friends with Chiaki. So,

**“Hikari Yumesaki, try hearing something from Hayato.”**

I wrote down the shocking parts of the day, and left everything to the me tomorrow.

From the recordings, it seemed Hayato should be easier to deal with. In that case, if Hikari Yumesaki, who's better at communicating, take action, I might be able to get something. Please, finish this mission.

“Hikari Yumesaki. You changed my everything.”

It's because of you showing up beside me that I started to like myself a little. If you take over, surely it'll succeed.

So I drew a detailed map on the notebook, wrote down the order to change the buses, and Chiaki's appearance characteristics. Should be fine. I just needed to help Hikari Yumesaki meet Hayato.

“Please, Hikari Yumesaki.”

**“Chiakin's so cute—!! I wanna be her friend!! I'm gonna conquer her no matter what! Sakamoto, make sure you be friends with Chiakin!! I made a promise with to meet her tomorrow!”**

“Ehh, I have to meet her again...”

Damn again, again with these unnecessary dates.

“More importantly, what did you learn from Hayato?”

Two days later, I woke up, and immediately opened the journal, flipping through it.

**“Well, Hayato just wouldn’t talk. I kept trying to ask, but he kept saying ‘it’s a condition to be friends with Chiaki’. As for the reason why they’re on the wheelchair, he wanted us to ask Chiakin.”**

**“So no can do?”**

I guess so. It seemed Hayato’s really insistent on having me be friends with Chiaki. What’s he planning on making me do.

**“Bu-but, I asked about how Hayato died! He said he had a sudden heart attack during club activity! He said it really–hurt! Really a painful death. It hurt when Hikari here died too. But I did anyway.”**

**“Stop talking like you’re both zombies or something.”**

I tried imagining two young people discussing ‘it hurt when I died’, and for something, I thought I was going insane.

**“Leaving this aside, Chiakin’s really cute! Her smile’s angelic!”**

**“Smile, huh?”**

Unfortunately, the Chiaki on my side’s automatically locked into scowling mode, so I never saw it.

**“And...fufu. I asked Hayato to touched Chiakin’s...they’re soft  
Ehehehe.”**

**“.....You...”**

I’m so envi...no no no, don’t think of such unnecessary stuff!

**“Also, Hayato’s really a decent person! I chatted a lot of interesting topics with him, and it’s like he’s a manzai actor! His personality definitely makes him popular. Fufu, if you don’t practice your humor here, Sakamoto, Hikari’s going to run away, you know-♪”**



Like I care.

Not bad. It seemed Hikari Yumesaki and Hayato were on very good terms. Chiaki and I were in the ice age.

**“Anyway, it does look like there’s no other way other than having you get on good terms with Chiakin. I asked Hayato to let Chiakin meet you, so do your best! Fight on!”**

After that, it was a plan Hikari Yumesaki came up with called the ‘★How to Conquer Chiakin★’. She filled an entire page, even drawing illustrations of Hikari Yumesaki in cheerleading outfit shaking the pompoms.

“So I have to do this myself? I get it.”

So, Akitsuki Sakamoto’s conquest log of Chiaki Tsukimura again began.

Ahh, I had a bad feeling about this...

I was hoping if Mars could drop out of a sudden, but unfortunately, such a coincidence could not happen. I could not find a reason to refuse, so after school, I rode the train towards Kanagawa without changing my clothes. One hour later, I reached my destination.

We met at the discussion room next to the library. She was already there, waiting for me...and obviously, she was on a wheelchair, looking at the pocket book with a gloomy look. Ughh, it’s scary.

“Yo, we meet again—”

“Don’t be mistaken. It’s only because Hayato bothered me to go that I came here. I wouldn’t know what he’ll use my body for if I didn’t. I have no choice.”

Before I could complete my greeting, Chiaki rattled off in rapid fire. Ugh, it's like she got this prepared for stabbing me. Even the 'I have no choice' part was really emphasized!

"Hayato left a message for you. Here."

Saying that, she handed me the voice recorder. Yes yes...I muttered as I received it. I then handed over the hot red tea I bought from a vending machine. She's cold.

"...This is?"

"Hm? Red tea."

"Why give this to me?"

"Because I think it's cold."

"..."

Hm? What's with the strange expression? She's going to complain saying that she wants coffer? If she actually said such selfish things at this point, i would have stormed off without a word.

"So, I remember file 1 is?"

"1 is the message I leave for Hayato, the message Hayato left for you is in 3. Don't be mistaken."

Right right, I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

I nodded, trying to shake off the gloominess, put the earphone into the recorder, and opened file 3. Right, I had to lower the volume. That loud booming voice's definitely going to be squabbling,–

"Yahooooo!!! We meet again☆. Hayato coming up!!!"

Ahh, you're noisy! Share some of your enthusiasm to your partner!

"Ehehe, how's my princess today? Rather interesting, isn't she?"

"What's interesting about this..."

I couldn't help but grumble. The moment I said that, I met those icy eyes, and swallowed the rest of my words. Yes yes, she's interesting.

"Anyway, try your best to get along with her~ She might not look like it, but she gets lonely easily. Make sure you get her by this weakness! Show me how understanding you are here!"

Tuuuuu—

After this message ended, I removed the earphones. Damn it, there's nothing useful at all.

I lifted my head, and I guess it's because it's cold that the princess before me was having a fight against the ring of the can. After she finally did so, she turned towards me—

"It is just Hayato's mistaken bias in thinking that I get lonely easily. Please forget about those words."

She actually wanted me to correct this. Such a proud person...

After saying those words, Chiaki again opened the notebook and started reading. What do I do next?

I was frustrated, but I had a way. I rummaged through the bag, took out the journal, and flipped to the '★How to Conquer Chiakin★' entry, and reread the content.

"Relax, Sakamoto, Hikari here loves kuudere (cold and dere), and no way will she lose to anyone here! Thus, Chiakin's considered conquered!"

First off, where's the dere for Chiaki? We got to discuss about this.

**"One of the basics to conquering her is to praise her! If there are options, choose the best option. This is the key to unlocking the H scene!"**

"This isn't an eroge."

But praise really is a basic. There's probably no girl out there who hated to be praised. If there's something I have to praise out of a sudden, I guess the only thing I can think of is about appearance.

Well, take it one step at a time. First, time for some a little more normal—

"Ah, now that I realize, your hair's really pretty. Really—"

"Is that so?"

Eh?

Try showing a little happiness! At least some shock! She remained unmoved and continued to read the book...ehh, I wanna give up!

"Nice voice. Very crisp."

"Is that so?"

"Ugh..."

Don't be scared! I wanna cry! At this moment, I should be looking at Hikari Yumesaki's entry,

**"Next, conquest basic two! Holding hands isn't a bad thing, but let's do body touch! A girl feels at ease when being touched by a guy! This might be an Olympian hurdle for a virgin like you, Sakamoto! Make sure not to drop any saliva or anything strange like that!"**

"I won't do such a disgusting thing!"

It's rare for Hikari Yumesaki to give me some suggestions, so I guess it's fine to try it out. It's not that my hands and heart are shaking because it's a girl's hand, not because I'll lose myself to giddiness once I touch that hand. I won't think of such virgin things. But since this ties into our fate, I could only go on with this!!

"Ah, ah, your hands are pretty too."

"Thank you."

"I wanna touch..."

"..."

And so Sakamoto naturally (naturally?) requested for a body touch.

However, Chiaki remained wary of me, and kept staring at me. She then took out something from the bag hanging on her wheelchair. Ah, isn't that our exchange journal?

Eh? What's she doing? I stared at Chiaki skeptically, and saw her open it—

**""So there's such a thing in the dustbin! Please save paper!""**

"Ah!?"

Th—that's the journal entry Hikari Yumesaki wrote down...!

**""Rule number 4: Handling biological needs! Only once a day!""**

"Ugh...!"

**""You're the type to get stiff watching ero anime?""**

"Ugh..."

**""I cut your fingernails for you.""**

“...”

“...Haaa...”

Chiaki gave me a condescending look, as though I was a middle aged man walking into the AV section.

“So you want me to touch those filthy hands? Such a lewd man. How disgusting.’

She gave said. Uuu...but, but...

“And also, I heard that you touched my chest while I was not the dominant personality.”

“No! That wasn’t me! It’s Hikari Yumesaki!”

“That Hayato said that Hikari Yumesaki told him **“Sakamoto ordered me to check the softness”** so he had no choice but to let Hikari Yumesaki touch them. Such a despicable person.”

THHHHAAATTT BASSSSTTTAARRRDDDD~::~::~::~!!!!

“Pervert.”

“Ughh...”

The queen’s condescending eyes left me unable to summon any courage to argue, and I lowered my head. Anyway, was it my fault...?

After much setback, the atmosphere was dead, and so, I couldn’t become friends with Chiaki. I could only return. Just to note, the conversation I had with Chiaki was,

“Do you like books?”

“If you don’t, don’t read.”

The conversation was as dry as a dried sardines in the desert.

This wasn't what I was asking! It-it's just some method to try to establish a conversation.

"What do I do now..."

I was on my way home, and it was cold and windy. I muttered as I looked up at the sky.

Ah, I forgot to take my notebook that's with Chiaki.

**"Hmmm, she's a tough cookie. But there's more worth in trying to conquer her whe it's more difficult."**

"It's your fault that I got a bad end."

Two days later, on Thursday.

I wrote down my utter defeat on the journal two days ago, and Hikari Yumesaki's reply had me wanting to retort, 'whose fault do you think it is', and yet gave me hope.

**"But it's fine! Hikari has a genius brain, and has thought of a wonderful plan. I got a helper, and spent an entire day practicing it to perefcting. Work with them, and surely you'll be able to get on well with Chiakin!"**

"Hm? Helper?"

What's going on? I read on with skepticism. Written there was,

**"Conquest three. Show her how cool you are."**

Written at the back was the strategy for the day–

"...We're really doing this?"

After school, I again took the train to Kanagawa. Again, I arrived at the old place—the discussion room next to the library, and sat opposite the domineering princess who was enjoying her book.

“It’s so cold today. Don’t make me go out all the time. My legs today are aching.

“Don’t say that. Here.”

The appearance and thickness of Chiaki’s legs were no different from usual, but she couldn’t move (though for unknown reasons). Those legs felt unbearable to me. I bought a handwarmer at the convenience store, and handed that along with the red tea. She’s prone to anger, but seeing how she went along with our stubbornness, she’s probably decent.

“...Hmp. Hayato left a message for you. Hear it.”

I received the voice recorder I was very familiar with. Erm, that’s file 3, right?

“What are you doing, Akicchi!! I heard from Chiaki that you sexually harassed her instead of making friends! I heard you touched her and made her angry!”

Huh!?

“Yo-you...!”

“It’s a fact that you wanted to touch me, no? With that intention, it is as though you touched me.”

No, it’s too much of a stretch...



“Hey hey, pull yourself together~ I won’t tell you how to revive if this keeps up. I’ll say this, that the difficulty of the missions will increase. You understand what I mean here, Akicchi?”

You got to be kidding me, right? Making friends’ the easiest part here? What do you mean? Some unsolvable game?

And so, after hearing this short message, I returned the recorder. Chiaki again got down to reading the book, as though say that her mission was done. Ugh...she’s so aloof.

But starting the next day, the situation’s going to change. Likely, right about—

“Hey! Stop resisting. Come here!”

It’s here—!

“...It’s a little noisy.”

A growl echoed suddenly. Chiaki and I turned around to look in unison. There were two guys in front of the wide grassy patch before the library.

“Hey, come here! Have a two shot with me! Stand up, kid!”

“I-I don’t want! Don’t be violent—kya!”

A pitiful looking boy was knocked aside by a tall guy, and collapsed onto the floor.

Right, standing there was the mohawk who became my disciple for some reason, and Kinoshita who has the appearance of a pretty boy, but was a lovesick girl inside.

“A-a commotion! Chiaki, I’ll go stop it now!”

“Eh–i-it’s dangerous!”

“Don’t worry. I’ll help anyone I see who’s in trouble! (Charges).”

So I said such a cliché line, and ran towards the duo.

...Right, I guess everyone could see from how confident I was. Everyone was part of the “Chiaki’s Conquest plan: Sexy Dream won’t die again.” I guess there’s nothing more to this slogan.

The plan’s simple.

I would beat down mohawk, who’s trying to woo Kinoshita, and have Chiaki change her view of me, “Amazing! I misunderstood you! Let’s hug!” Well, this would be something heroic only Hikari Yumesaki would think of. I was skeptical as to whether this operation would work, but it seemed they kept practicing it for an entire day. With those two really giving their all, I really couldn’t bring myself to refuse. So I came here.

However, there was something I was worried about.

“Hey! Stand up! Take a two shot with me!”

Mohawk’s still fine. I really wanted to snark “You’re still insisting on a two shot”, but whatever.

The problem was–

“No! So-somebody save me!”

The pretty girl–actually a pretty boy had tears on the face, and was so agitated, but I just sensed something was amiss.

**“I said I want them to conquer a girl, and they agreed happily!”** Hikari Yumesaki wrote on the journal. I remembered that Kinoshita likes me, but he’s willing to help hook me up with another girl, which seemed suspicious.

After I got harassed by him, I always had to watch my back to prevent him from attack. Really, I had enough. It would be great if he gave up on me.

But leaving those things aside, the most important thing would be to complete the mission.

I cast aside all random thoughts, ran towards them, put my hands on my hips as I stood before Mohawk, and yelled,

“Hey, stop this! I won’t allow anyone to bully the weak!”

“Who-who are you!? If you do not please move aside, I’ll beat you up!”

Hey Mohawk! Why the formal language now! You’ll ruin everything, you idiot!

“S-save me, bro!”

At the same time, Kinoshita was clinging behind me, as scripted.

Ah, nice smell...no no no! He’s a guy! Gotta pull myself together!”

“Mohawk, you dare do this to such a pitiful boy...such inappropriateness! Take this!”

And so, I followed the script, and punched Mohawk in the face (of course, it’s faked).

Then, Mohawk got punched hard by me —

“...?” “...?”

Uh, eh? Mohawk?

Why aren’t you moving? You’re supposed to be punched away now, right? What’s wrong?

“(Eh, Sakamoto, I remembered you should be shouting ‘**Sexy cute punch!**’ as according to script, right?)”

“(Just forget about that line!)”

Don’t mind the details!

“...” “...”

“Warrgh!”

After an unnaturally long time.

Mohawk timidly retreated, shouted, “I’m remember this.” And bowed before leaving. You’re too unnatural for a delinquent...

“You-you fine there?”

But Mohawk’s bad acting didn’t deject me. I kept acting, and glanced aside at Chiaki. I saw her come outside with a surprised look, and was looking at us. Once I was sure of this, I gently carried Kinoshita.

“I-I got saved! Thanks!”

So ended the scene. Chiaki probably had an improved impression on me. Now, all I have to do is to use this chance —

Chuuu.



“ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ ”

My lips were stuffed.

Who? It's from the boy hugging me

.....Eh?

“Bro.”

After more ten seconds, the face that touched my lips was smiling several millimetres away from my face.

His eyes were as dark at the bottom of a well, as though saying these words,

“I won't hand you over to that woman. I'm showing it right here.”

Wait-!? This kid's been planning for a homerun the entire time!

“...Not good!”

I hurriedly looked away from Kinoshita, and locked onto Chiaki, but it was too late.

Chiaki's face was showing an unprecedented level of disgust.

“...So you do have such interests, huh? That's why you excitedly went over to save her.”

“No, listen to me! This isn't it! It's a misunderstanding!”

“Speaking of which, when I first met you at the station, you did call a man cute...”

“...No! That was all your fault!”

Ehh listen to me! I said that's not the case! There's a lot of things wrong with this!

I frantically tried to explain, but Chiaki left without giving me a look.

Behind her was me, who was standing there blankly, and Kinoshita, who kept embracing me in ecstasy. Mohawk was slightly far away, doing single arm push ups, yelling "I didn't see anything! I didn't see anything at all!"  
Damn it...what's with this bad end...

**"How's the taste LOLOLOLOL How's the taste LOLOLOLOL That lovesick shota X teary delinquent LOLOLOL It's here ROFLCOPTER"**

"It's all your fault, you idiot..."

Two days later, it was Saturday. The morning of this rest day was filled with painful memories. I was praying that I would forget once I woke up...but that feeling still...ugghh.

So, two days ago, when I dug up a hole I couldn't bury, it was game over. The tragedy awaiting me was the dazzling desire of my little sister, "Brother, Kaoru called me! How's the taste of kissing a guy"!?" A refreshing peach! Don't remind me!

"This is terrible."

Leaving aside the nightmare, I dared to conclude that I wouldn't be able to make friends with Chiaki.

I thought it was terrible, but I really could not think of any way to settle this. I gave up, and wrote down on the notebook, "Anyway, I guess I should try telling Chiaki the truth. Failure doesn't matter here." And so Hikari

Yumesaki answered me, **“Hey, you’re really writing this?”** why did it seem like she was angry?”

**“It doesn’t look like things are going well, but Hikari won’t give up! I’ll ask Mohawk to attack Chiakin directly! Once Sakamoto saves Chiakin, the operation will be perfect! I asked Hayato to call Chiakin out to meet, so do your best”**

“...Let’s do our best then.”

I stared at the notebook, hesitated a little, and made up my mind.

I made up my mind, and made a phone call to Mohawk.

He respectfully answered, and what I said to him was–

It was after 2.

I had a casual lunch, took the train like usual towards Kanagawa, and arrived at the discussion room beside the library I was gradually familiar with, finding Chiaki there, reading a book. Of course, she showed no reason even though she saw me.

“Yo, sorry for having you come out every day.”

“Yeah. You should be giving up.”

Chiaki flipped through the pages, the rippling sounds of the pages being flipped echoing her inner heart.

“Some delinquent with some strange hairstyle will be coming out today. He’s going to attack me now, right?”

So she saw through that? But it’s to be expected.

“No, he won’t be coming. I just refused him.”



“-Eh?”

I made a call to Mohawk, telling him to stop the plan. I said a lot of reasons, like something was exposed, didn't seem like the plan would go well, but most importantly, it was that,

“This really doesn't seem appropriate.”

I was really sorry to Hikari Yumesaki, who worked hard for my sake, but her methods were wrong.

I didn't have to right to say this when I didn't make a bosom friend, but this shouldn't be how friends should be made. I had no intention of telling off Hikari Yumesaki, but in the end, she just wanted to create opportunities for me. I knew that.

If I were Chiaki however, how would I feel?

Some people wanted to be friends with her, but these people were only doing it for the sake of wanting to revive. Basically, wanting to make friends here would just be a mean. If I were the one being treated this way, it would be expected that I would be furious. Really, did Hayato understand these?

Having come to this conclusion, I decided to visit without making any plans. What should I do?

I put the talisman Hikari Yumesaki made for me on the palm, and sighed. If only I had that communicative ability of hers...sigh.

“Did Hikari Yumesaki make this?”

At sunset, the conversation began. It was rare to not have such an unpleasant feeling.

“Yep. She said it’s for good fortune.”

And so, I calmly answered. What Chiaki said next was really twisted. Certainly, she had some malice in her words as she said,

“You had it tough too. To be...possessed by a really boisterous person.”

“-!”

Her words left me momentarily unable to say anything

...What did, she just say?

“My partner–Hayato’s the same too. It’s really tough having a partner do whatever he wants. Tormented all day long. You have it tough too, don’t you, Sakamoto?”

“No, I...”

However, Chiaki probably did not care about what I was about to say as she continued on,

“I’ve read through the journal I borrowed from you. Looking it, it seemed she really didn’t care about bothering others, she’s selfish, does what she wants, and prone to tantrums. Speaking of which, is Yumesaki someone you willing gave up half your life for? To be honest, I really am not fond of her.”

“That’s true, but...”

“She took half your lifespan, but showed an unwillingness to vanish. Is her true personality not clear to see? She doesn’t want to disappear, and that’s why she’s panicking. She never thought anything about you. You really are a failure. You gave up half your life for such a person.”

“ ... ”

“It’s time for you to stop. There’s no need to force yourself to revive her. Besides—”

“Hey.”

I called out subconsciously.

I had to be friends with her. I had to be on good terms with her.

But even so, I still said it out.

“If you don’t know anything, don’t badmouth Hikari Yumesaki.”

“ ... ”

Some silence, and the buzzing from afar reached my ear. Chiaki’s icy stare was piercing right through me.

I remembered something similar happening before; It was when Misaki was mocking Hikari Yumesaki’s actions. I could endure being mocked, but I would never allow anyone to mock Hikari Yumesaki. This time, Chiaki criticized Hikari Yumesaki, and I couldn’t stand that.

“...Here, read this journal.”

I took it out, and flipped it open. It’s the exchange diary we’re using at this point. It contained the messages Hikari Yumesaki left for me, and talked about Chiaki.

Actually, I left a suggestion to Hikari Yumesaki—that I might have to coerce her into saying the way to revive her. I had no other choice. I worked so hard for Hikari Yumesaki, and she wanted me to finish some missions. I was infuriated.

But the pretty words Hikari Yumesaki wrote with was,

**“Thanks Sakamoto. I’m glad you’re saying such words for my sake, but please endure for now, and consider being friends with Chiakin. It’s just my guess, but I’m guessing they’re having some troubles at this point. Hayato once said, Akicchi might be able to save us, so listen to me, Sakamoto. Work hard for Chiakin. This is my request. It’s rare to be able to find someone in the same boat as us. Even leaving aside my revival, I want to help those two. I want to help our friends.”**

I showed this long column before Chiaki’s eyes.

“And this too.”

“ ... ”

I flipped to the next page, and again, there was the journal entry from Hikari Yumesaki,

**“A-and also! I want to be friends with Chiakin as soon as possible! I want to discuss Sakamoto with Chiakin! She’s definitely a good. Kuuderes aren’t bad people! So please, Sakamoto! If it’s you, it’ll definitely succeed. Hikari believes in you! Let’s work hard together to conquer Chiakin!”**

“ ... ”

I flashed the journal to Chiaki, saw that she read it, and said,

“...She really does whatever she wants, likes to play pranks, and never thinks of the consequences. In any case, she’s a hopeless one. But, she’s really kind. Even when she’s dying, she’s still considerate towards others. She’s that kind of person, able to show such care and concern to you whom she never met.”

“ ... ”

Chiaki remained wordless.

“And I know, Hikari Yumesaki’s antics—are all just her trying to act tough.”

Always doing stupid things to act tough, but she was utterly worried of her own future.

Sometimes, she might even go psychotic.

I heard from Madam Hinako that Hikari Yumesaki would hide the fact that she would return to the watermelon field from time to time.

Sometimes, I would see marks of erased works in the notebook.

Sometimes, entire pages were ripped off. Surely, she showed weakness—but she wanted to hide them all. Even when I asked her, **“I spilled the coffee”**, she would just pass it off as such. She’s definitely lying. If coffee really was spilled over, given her personality, she would not let it be.

She must be feeling really uneasy, even fearful.

However, whenever she saw someone in distress, she would put consideration to that person immediately.

She always prioritized others, and could not help herself whenever she saw others cry.

It’s because of this, that she became like this, supporting me for Chiaki’s sake. It’s because she’s such a person that I would continue to work hard, and not give up. I had to pretend not to see Hikari Yumesaki’s weakness, and ran about everywhere, acting like nothing had happened, that I did not see anything. This was the Akitsuki Sakamoto she wanted. It’s because Hikari Yumesaki’s such a person that I—

“Don’t badmouth Hikari Yumesaki if you don’t understand anything. She’s a kind person.”

For some reason, I choked. I said this, and lowered my head.

“...There’s no need to cry, is there?”

“...Shut up.”

Don’t look at my fierce looks this way. I’m a crybaby.

“...” “...”

I kept wiping my tears.

An awkward silence lingered between us. Unexpectedly, in such a mood, the one to first speak up was Chiaki.

“...You.”

Hm?

“Had half of your lifespan taken by Hikari Yumesaki.”

She gulped, and said,

“Do you regret it?”

Regret. For some reason, that term sounded sad.

What did she mean by this sudden question? Probably about the matter of the shortened lifespan, or...never mind. In any case, the answer would always be the same.”

“Not at all. Not even once.”

It’s not a lie. Hikari Yumesaki’s worth giving half my life for. She changed my entire life. Even half my lifespan wasn’t enough. For Hikari Yumesaki, I—

“.....I see.”

Chiaki went silent, and lowered her head, her long hair covering her face, but I could see her lips quivering, as though she wanted to say something. 'I suppose I overdid it' she probably had such a thought—that was what I imagined. Of course, Chiaki was not so honest.

"I see. Well, whatever. It has nothing to do with me."

She sulked at me, and said such deflating words.

Such a twisted person. Damn it...well, let's go home early.

"Did Hayato leave a message for me?"

"Yes. Here."

The atmosphere was as awkward as parents arguing. Chiaki handed me the recorder.

This helpless anxiety left me clicking my tongue lightly as I inserted the earphone, and played it. After hearing this, I'll go back. Ah, got to lower the voice. It's probably that yell or something.

*"Now then, let's start recording."*

While I had such a thought, an unexpectedly calm sounding voice rang.

What? A very formal greeting here? This certainly was rare—

*"Sakamoto came by again on this day. I don't know what you are planning, Hayato, but is it not time to tell them? It's terrible to have them come here the entire time."*

!?

*"Also, Hayato, you kept worrying if Sakamoto is an annoying person, but there's no need to worry about that. He's kind, always giving me hand warmers and drinks and such. Also, once he saw that I had difficulty opening the can, he would open it*

*before giving it to me. He really takes care of people will. I really do hope you learn from him. Fufu."*

Eh, eh...? Hayato?

*"When we first met, I was really scared. However, I quickly understood that he's a kind person. After reading through the journal shared by him and Yumesaki, I understood. Don't you find it interesting? Sakamoto's always being tortured...erm, that 'use the mouth' part is really interesting. Yumesaki's definitely a nice person. Hey, Hayato. Mind telling me how Yumesaki is as a person?"*

.....

*"More importantly, you should be telling them the truth. I have no confidence that I can be friends with them. I tried putting on a cold facade again today. I can't do it. Even if I become friends, it'll be like before. We'll end up arguing because of my legs. I don't want to experience that pain again. I rather not make friends. I can't change myself."*

.....

*"And leaving that aside, i have reasons why I do not want to make friends. That day, I decided not to. Please, Hayato, understand me."*

.....

*"Sakamoto must be really desperate to save Yumesaki. Hey, you should tell them. I hope they will have a happier life. That's what you're hoping for, aren't you, Hayato?"*

.....

*"What's the matter?"*



I took out the earphone, and stared at Chiaki's face blankly. She immediately asked with disgust, her voice as she frowned sounding the same as the voice from the recorder.

"..."

“:?”

"...Ah, I remember it's file 3, right?"

"-Eh."

Ah, damn—

"Ahhhhh!!!! Yo-you heard it!?"

"Eh!? Ah, no! I didn't hear anything! Nothing at all!"

Not good! I made a mistake! It's an unprecedented crisis!

"I-i-is it 1!? Or 2!? Which one did you hear!?"

Ah, no, th-that, that's—

"It-it's 2! File 2, the message Hayato left for you—"

"Then tell me what 2 is about!"

"This..."

Ah, not good. That, that...

““C-Chiakin...is cute~...' or something...”

Ah, this is bad, really bad.

Chiaki shivered, her face was all red, and she appeared to be on the verge of tears—

“There’s no way Hayato will say such words!”

Thud!

A loud sound struck at my eardrum, and even the air shook.

I-I was mistaken...

“Y-you idiot—!”

After that, Chiaki went silent, lowered her head, and her face was unbelievably red.

“Ah, erm...”

This is bad. This is really bad. I really should be laughing right now.

“H-hey...”

“...”

“It’s fine. Erm. That Hikari Yumesaki, she...”

“...”

“...Really loves kuuderes...”

And naturally, she threw the hand warmer at me with all her might.

**“The name written in this notebook shall die after following Hikari-chan’s orders.”**

“What’s with this out of a sudden?”

I think I heard of this designation somewhere.

**“Akitsuki Sakamoto, I wanted to call Hayato, but I made a wrong call to Kasumi, and said ‘let’s go out and play together’! Let me touch your chest eheheh LOLLOL’. Once you are done solving that mistake, die for Hikari’s sake.”**

“...Whatever.”

Anyway, leaving that aside.

A week later.

While I was about to forget about revealing Chiaki’s cute side, I was summoned to a large fancy mansion—the Tsukimuras.

“Your family’s rich. What do your parents do?”

“I’m not very sure. They’re always working overseas.”

We chatted as we entered the mansion that was installed with disabled facilities.

Why was it that when I asked to meet at the same place, this moody girl suddenly invited me to her house? Why was I being treated like a friend?

**“Don’t be mistaken. I’m just taking the lesser between the failure to call you to my house, and having to endure the cold outside (stares).”**

If she actually said such a tsundere line, I could understand. In fact, she said,

“It-it’s rare of you to come all the way here. So, erm, I want you to have some tea.”

“Did you hit your head on something?” So I asked without thinking.

But, I supposed I had an idea as to why Chiaki did this. The me on the previous day said,

**“Hehehe! Sakamoto! You seem to be getting along with Chiakin better! Hayato looks really happy too! To make sure you two get along better, I told Hayato, ‘it looks like Sakamoto likes Chiakin, you know? He said he wants to hug her too’ Enjoy this kuudere☆”**

Always with the unnecessary stuff.

It seemed this false intel went from Hayato to Chiaki, and she had been looking anxious all this while. Finally, Chiaki brought me to the guest room, muttering along the way,

“Thinking about it, inviting him here would get him hoping for something...wh-what...”

And so, we arrived in the guest room, sat down, and as expected, both of us went silent.

“...”“...”

I stared at Chiaki’s blushing face, wondering if she probably wasn’t used to people saying that they liked her. I was the same when Kasumi confessed to me.

“Ah...Miss, Chiaki?”

“Wh-what?”

Chiaki played with her hair, trying to sound aloof. Well, let’s make this clear. It’s awkward.

“...That thing about me liking you is all Hikari Yumesaki’s lie.”

At that moment, she immediately threw the handwarmer she really liked at my head.

So it ended up like this?

“Anyway, hand me the voice recorder. I got to hear the message Hayato left for me.”

“...It’s number 3.”

Got it...after some smiles, Chiaki finally calmed down, and handed the earphone to me. I pressed the switch, and the greeting from the earphone was so similar to the voice of the girl before me; only the emotional state seemed completely different.

“Yooo—! This is Hayato! You seem to be doing well, Akicchi. But at this point, it does seem a little different from being a friend now. It’s more like a ‘I can leave my daughter with you’ phase, you know?”

Who knows? What are you talking about?

“But since you managed to successfully complete the mission, as reward, I’m going to tell you next next mission, you know♪ Mission number two! Call Chiaki directly by name! Nihihi, the mission difficulty will increase slowly, you know? But you should be able to handle this in a matter of seconds, right?”

“Isn’t this quite difficult...?”

This is mission two. How bad will the final mission be? Ask me to kiss Chiaki?

I took off the earphone, and looked at the girl before me, who immediately looked away. Ah, so she heard this recording too. Surely she’s going ‘I can’t do this’.

Leaving that aside.

It's been weeks since I met Chiaki's pair. At this point, I had yet to obtain any information on 'how to revive' that they knew.

From time to time, we would wake up early, and find that Hikari Yumesaki's time did not decrease. As for what would happen afterwards, we wouldn't know. Thus, this isn't the time for meaningless missions.

**"I know you are feeling anxious, but right now, do as Hayato says. Surely they have some troubles. Please, Sakamoto. Endure this for now, i'm fine."**

However, Hikari Yumesaki's still putting others before herself. I wanted Hayato to 'reveal a little more'! But since Hikari Yumesaki herself said so, forget about it. Yep. Chiaki was told by Hayato not to say anything, so leaving that aside, what's Hayato planning for us to do? He's ridiculous.

Anyway, there's no progress.

On this day, I was seated before Chiaki, who was reading the book; I nibbled at a senbei, and placed a cellphone game until sunset. When I was about to head home.

"Please take this."

"Hm?"

Chiaki sent me to the corridor, and handed me a large black coat. Probably her father's. Why this again,

"Yumesaki appears to have caught a cold. Be careful."

"Ah, yeah, I see."

I see. So Hikari Yumesaki's not feeling well due to cold. But why didn't Chiaki dare to look at me in the eyes, and she's blushing a little. If I asked, I probably would incur her wrath.

"Come back again two days later.....Akitsuki."

"Ohhh—eh?"

...Ah, I see. So she's helping me here?

"Understood. I'll come back again.....Chiakin."

"Don't add that part."

"Yes yes."

Mission two complete.

**"I couldn't do the English mini-Test at all...I hate to take retests, so I tried to negotiate with the teacher, and got scolded..."**

"Negotiate?"

**"That teacher's always looking at girls in a perverted manner, so I tried to negotiate with upskirt photos..."**

"Of course you'll get scolded."

Two days later, it was a stupid complaint of a journal entry, and I weakly retorted.

**"But but, when I had Hayato teach me, I managed to solve all the questions! Hayato's a super genius!"**

"Heh, so that guy's amazing at studies."

That was too surprising. He clearly seemed like an idiot.

**“Ehehe, so I asked Hayato out to play two days later, that he’ll teach me before we play games~ eheheh, Hayato and I really do get along. I’m looking forward to it~”**

“I-I see.”

Surely Hikari Yumesaki looked really happy. They seemed to get along now.”

“And this will be it for today’s journal entry. Good night, Sakamoto! See you♪”

I closed the notebook filled with ramblings, and took out my cellphone.

I checked the call logs. Looking at it, it seemed she spent a lot of time talking with Hayato. After that, they were spent a long time exchanging emails—

...What’s with this feeling? Why’s that Hikari Yumesaki being so happy...

“Hayato, huh...?”

“You want to know about Hayato?”

“Yeah.”

It was after school.

I came to the mansion, met Chiaki in the guest room, and immediately asked this question.

“Hmph...I see.”

For some reason, Chiaki seemed a little angry, but she rattled on,



“Hayato’s my childhood friend, lives nearby, and is of similar age, so we often played together when we were younger. There weren’t any other kids of similar ages nearby, so that’s all to it.”

Uh huh, so?

“...”

“Eh? That’s it?”

“What else do you want to know?”

No, say something else, like personality, likes, relationships with females!

“Why do you want to know about Hayato so much? Is there something—”

Suddenly, she seemed to realize something, took up the exchange journal of Hikari Yumesaki and me, and had a look at it. Ah, speaking of which, I should have her return it to me.

While I had such a thought, ‘I see.’ So Chiaki said, and suddenly giggled. Wh-what...

“Yes. Hayato’s called a genius.”

“Genius?”

“He’s decent at sports, outstanding at studies, often at the top of the national mock exam rankings. He’s cheerful, and very popular with girls.”

Really? He’s popular with girls?

“But he’s a rowdy person, always a busybody, angering others. I thought he would reflect on things, but there will always be new squabbles the next day. He’s that sort of person.”

I see. He really seemed similar to a certain person.

“I really hate him.”

“Hate”

“That him.”

“...Eh?”

H-hate?

“It’s obvious why I would hate such a rowdy person. That sort of guy became my other half, and it’s terrible. Thanks to him, I’m in this state. It’s troublesome.”

“Eh, but—”

I recalled the content of the file I carelessly came upon. I recalled Chiaki badmouthing Hayato right from the beginning, but hearing that message had me thinking that they’re rather close.

“Well, I got no other choice here. I left half my body with him. If I don’t go along with his will, I don’t know what he’ll do with my body. Seriously, this is troublesome, really troublesome.”

“Ah, I see.”

I personally recalled the fear of leaving my body to the me tomorrow, so I understood Chiaki’s feelings.

“...”

So I kept staring at Chiaki.

On first glance, I saw that she was scowling at the book. But as I pricked my ears.

“What...you idiot...I said that’s a place that belongs only to the two of us.”

“I said I wouldn’t talk to him again...”

And so, from time to time, I would hear such muttering. After that, I recalled the content of the recordings I heard. I remembered Hayato saying this,

“Is Akicchi still energetic? Congratulations on finishing mission two! Leaving that aside, my body’s in fine condition today, so I went out on a date in this wheelchair with Hikaricchi. There’s a hill nearby with a nice sea view. The dazzling scenery as the sunset shines is really breathtaking! Chiaki likes this place, so I thought that since my body’s feeling a little better, I should bring her along~”

Yep, there’s probably something about this message. This kuudere princess being in such a bad mood probably is because of this, surely.

—I really hate him.

I recalled what Chiaki just said, and at the same time, I recalled this designation of kuudere I had for her.

Hm, but, I suppose I somewhat understood that a pessimistic girl has a very sensitive heart.

“Time to probe a little bit.”

I muttered softly, with a voice Chiaki could not hear.

It’s a rare rest day with fine weather, and Hayato left a voice message for me,

“Yahoo! Kept you waiting, right? I’ll tell you mission three right now. Let’s get straight to the point now. You’re going to do a princess carry right now! Pretend to touch her butt! It’s soft!”

While I was feeling frustrated by such messages, Chiaki said that she had to go out to buy some groceries, so I went along. At this point, I thought I should push her wheelchair.”

“I shouldn’t be relying on others.”

She refused, and I could only walk by her side. I thought she hated the idea of owing others favour. But it seemed she really insisted that she would do whatever she could do.

After that, we arrived at a supermarket at the parking lots, one ridiculously big. It so happened that the lanes were wide, and most importantly, there was an elevator.

“Ah.”

“What is it?”

“There’s an electronics department there.”

“So what?”

“My earphones seem a little old. Let’s go check them out.”

Chiaki turned her wheelchairs without a word before saying this. I guess it’s fine to go look for this, but I really found it hard to associate someone with this big mansion with earphones.

“This isn’t bad. Easy to us. I like it.”

Ah, I see. That’s good.

We wordlessly stroll through the supermarket. As we continued on, Chiaki asked,

“...Akitsuki.”

“Hm?”

“Did you make some rules? At that moment...”

I watched what she was holding with scepticism. It’s a bottle of shampoo refill. Ah.

“Hikari Yumesaki basically made the choices. Whatever she chooses, I use. No second thought about it.”

Why do girls really pay this much attention to shampoos? Isn’t it alright if that sort of thing can create bubbles? However, it seemed Chiaki was not trying to ask about this.

“No, this isn’t it. That...”

“Hm?”

“Ru-rules of hairwashing, or something...”

Hm? What about that? What did she mean?

“I need to soak my body in the bathtub for more than a minute, that sort of thing, I guess? There has to be some rules with regards to that. She really seem to pay heed to what my little sister says, like, just a little soak, and it’s done. After washing, she’ll face the mirror naked, doing bodybuilder poses, and always get caught by my little sister...”

“This isn’t what I’m talking about!”

While I was dabbling away at my daily grumbles, Chiaki anxiously interrupted my words.

“This isn’t what I’m trying to talk about. Erm...”

Hm?

“Rules of...being seen naked...”

...Ah, this is what you’re talking about.

Chiaki covered her blushing face with her silky hair, and from that, I seemed to realize something. I see. No, actually, I was curious about that too. It appeared they’re the same.

I was shy, and I didn’t think too much about it, but for two personalities of different genders in the same body, it meant that the other party would see, and touch various private parts. At first, I was embarrassed, telling Hikari Yumesaki ‘be careful of where you’re touching’. It’s Hikari Yumesaki though,

**“Hehehehe LOLOLOL. I won’t touch, I won’t touch LOLOLOLOL. I never thought the cool delinquent’s thing is so small and cute, so relax. I never thought it’ll be so different from the appearance, but the gap moe is really too great.”**

Hikari Yumesaki crushed my self-confidence, and severely dealt a blow to my soul. Ever since then, I would try my best never to talk about this again.

Leaving this emotional trauma aside, it seemed Chiaki had similar troubles.

“I’ve given up on it. That Hikari Yumesaki won’t follow the rules.”

“...I guesss.”

“So you made some rules too?”

“Close the eyes when going to the bathroom or bathing...”

“...Did he follow the rules?”

“...”

Ahh, she’s blushing.

I guessed so. Leaving aside breaking the rules, whenever a guy sees a girl’s body—

“...It’s terrible. I had someone I hate see my body, and probably got touched...when he was alive, Hayato often flipped the skirts of girls...”

Chiaki grumbled in frustration. Hm, but she couldn’t do anything about it. If I’m to share the same body with Chiaki...I’ll probably do that doo.

But more importantly, it’s a rare opportunity, so I should have Chiaki be honest here.

“So you do hate Hayato after all.”

“Of course. That guy doesn’t understand a girl’s heart.”

“Hmph, I see.”

“He’s always lacking in delicacy since young. It’s really troubling. Back when we were in elementary school—”

“Enough with the memories. I see. So you hate him?”

“Yep. He might be the one guy I really hate on this world.”

“Eh, I see.”

...Right, time to settle this.

Okay, Chiaki. Show me your true self now.

“Speaking of which.”

“What is it?”

“Hikari Yumesaki once wrote something about Hayato on the journal.”

“Ah, probably some little things though.”

“No no no. Well, Hayato seemed to have said something really amazing.”

“?...What did he say? Don’t play around. Tell me.”

“Hm. Nothing much. Hikari Yumesaki said that—”

“...”

“Hayato—‘hates’ Chiaki, so she said.”

“Eh...”

At that moment.

All confidence on Chiaki’s face vanished, and she let out a painful squeal.

Yep, too easy. How honest you are, Chiaki.

“Need me to say this to him through Hikari Yumesaki? That Chiaki ‘hates’ Hayato.”

“N-no, this is...”

“But this is hard to say by yourself, you know? Or is it better to make this clear?”

“I-I’m not...”

“Don’t worry. I’ll help you out.”

“B-but...”



“I’ll say that—Chiaki really does like Hayato.”

Chiaki gave me a shocked look, and seemed to have realized something as she flusteredly looked away. However, it was all too late. She’s really someone worth teasing right now. My sadistic blood is awakened.

“...I’ll kill you if you say that.”

“You want to kill me?”

Wait, I guess it was because I was joking around with Chiaki, that I did not react to whatever she said next.

“...Don’t you like Hikari Yumesaki too?”

Thud—!

I carelessly loosened my hand, and the shampoo dropped onto the floor.

Wh-what...

“I’m right, am I? **‘June 2nd, Sakamoto received a confession?’**, and your answer was **‘just once, what about you?’**”

“—!!!?”

Ho-how did you remember it so clearly—!?

“Hikari Yumesaki’s answer is **‘Secret’**, and your answer was **‘I’m not really curious about it, but whatever’**.”

“Ahhhhhhh!! Don’t say it! Don’t say it!”

I regret that too!!

“**‘I’m not really curious about it, but whatever’**.”

“Stop! I beg of you!”

**“I’m, not, really, curious, about, it, but, whatever”**

“I get it! It’s my fault! I’m sorry!”

“Hmph...”

Damn it...a perfect counter...

“...Keep it a secret.”

After that, Chiaki said to with the usual tender voice.

“You too. Understand?”

“That’ll depend on your performance.”

Ack...I was supposed to be on the attack, but why does it feel that I lost?

Damn it, this shouldn’t be happening...ahh, it’s too embarrassing.

“Kya.”

“Hey, hurry up and pay up.”

I put my hand on Chiaki’s wheelchair, trying to hide my own embarrassment, and pushed her off with my might.

With that, she wouldn’t be able to see my expression. If possible, I didn’t want anyone else to see how I looked.

“...”

For a moment, I thought she would be lashing out at me, ‘don’t do anything unnecessary’, but unexpectedly, she did not say anything.

Looking between the gaps of her silky hair, I could vaguely see a pair of white, cute ears.

Those ears were sizzling red, and I sensed a girlish presence.

“Well, this is a decent place.”

“Sorry, I have difficulty going up alone.”

“It’s nothing. Don’t mind.”

An orange engulfed the sunset.

After we were done shopping, for some reason, Chiaki insisted on treating me, so we arrived at a café, had an hour of tea. We shared our secrets, but I was guessing she wanted an additional failsafe? While I had such a thought, Chiaki suddenly said, ‘I want to go elsewhere’, so I did what she said, pushed her wheelchair for a few dozen minutes, and we arrived at a sloped hill where the sea could be seen.

“Let’s take a rest.”

Chiaki said, and relaxed under the wide sky. I too imitated her, and stared at the scenery far away.

The fire-scorched clouds were flickering with orange light, and the ripples on the endless sea appeared to be burning. I guess it was because I was tall that the sky seemed so close, and there was an unprecedented calmness I felt. I looked down, and the houses beneath had their lights lit, like the blocks I played with when I was younger.

“Erm, it does feel, well, don’t you find yourself small when you look away like this?”

“Hmm, yeah.”

I felt so unbearable, so lonely. It felt as strange as something that was scattered, unable to be replaced.

That's the feeling anyone would have at this place. To Chiaki, this was a special place. What was she planning at when she brought me here?

"This is payoff. This place has the memories Hayato and I have."

It seemed Chiaki saw through my doubts as she softly noted. Ah, I see. So she was still jealous of that before. That's why she insisted on bringing me here.

The laughable differences between a boy and a girl's thoughts caused me to smile. The light from the fire-scorched clouds caused my face to heat up slightly.

While I was immersed in such sadness, Chiaki suddenly said with a clear voice.

"I was born with paralysis."

"Eh—"

This unexpected term hit me.

After a few seconds, I recovered. That was the reason why Chiaki was on the wheelchair.

"There's a problem with my brain. Before I reached maturity, my legs could not move."

"..."

I had a rough feeling about it, that Chiaki's legs were not because of some injury that could be healed over time, like a leg fracture or muscle tear.

"But even then, I never lamented my misfortune. I was envious of the people around me, and there were boys who teased me because of my legs.

But I had a happy family, my family's rich, and I had a nice group of friends. I didn't have a lot of things to really be frustrated by. What happened was—"

Chiaki's voice sounded gloomy, and that difference triggered a deep resonance.

"When I was in second grade, I had a flu. I originally assumed that I would recover with such some rest, but the illness never got better. You should know what happened after that. Such an illness will lower a person's immunity system, and thus, I couldn't go school at all, and I couldn't go play. I had to be hospitalized."

"..."

"After that, the illness worsened. As I was young, I did not recover, back then, I ended up having all kinds of illnesses, let alone recover. I was bedridden, tormented by nausea and headaches. That was all I could only remember."

The painful memories left Chiaki's lips a little stiff, and she continued,

"At first, my friends would visit. However, they became few in number...it's to be expected. Everyone has their own lives. However, when I was younger, I couldn't accept it, and the negative emotions kept piling up. One day, I threw a tantrum at the one kid who came to visit me. That was the kid who came to visit me even after everyone else did not come by."

Chiaki gave a self-reproaching smile, and continued,

"I really regretted it. After that, nobody visited me, and I spent every day in loneliness. But I was hoping that once I got discharged and returned to school, everything would be back to normal, that if I apologized, they'll definitely forgive me...but reality's not that easy. Even at school, there was

no place for me in my old circle of friends. I wanted to apologize, but I couldn't, because I got aloof, unable to be as honest as before."

...I see. As expected, reality's such a thing. Nobody's at fault here.

However, one becomes unfortunate due to the sudden arrangement of fate. Chiaki just so happened to be caught up in one.

"Back then, I was suffering. I was the only one different from everyone; I had to take this slow wheelchair, like a criminal paraded on the streets. I was wondering why did I have such a life. My symptoms worsened. Whenever I was recovering from my headache, my vision faltered. Even now, there are times when I wake up giddy. Sometimes, I can't move because my legs hurt. I often threw a tantrum, argued with my family. Back then, I was only in elementary school, and I could only cup my head and cry—but."

Chiaki continued on, trying to blow aside the sad past,

"Someone kept supporting me."

"That's—"

"Yep, the boy who used to tease me—Hayato."

Hayato.

The name finally showed up. I sensed Chiaki's voice softening.

"I really meant it when I said I hated him. Back when I was little, I really hated him. He's a loudmouth, so energetic and jumpy. He's skinny than me, but he's great at running, sports, and always teased me. I was always wondering, why is my childhood friend such a person. I really, really hated him."

Really hated him.

It seemed like a repulsive term, yet there was some soft feeling to it. Surely this was Chiaki's—

“But I remembered that back when I was in third grade, I didn't have enough attendance as I had to take leave often, and had to retake exams with Hayato, who often failed his exams. ‘Your legs aren't healed?’, he asked me. Back in the day, he used to tease me, and yet he was showing concern. I answered ‘I'll never be healed’, he apologized, ‘sorry’ and suddenly cried. I thought he forgot about it, and thought he already forgot about how he teased me. I intended not to forgive him for the rest of my life, but in the end, to him, well, I won't be angry—”

Chiaki said with some regret, probably to hide her awkwardness.

Apology, forgiveness.

That was it—yet, surely, this was the thing, combined with many other feelings, that linked these two together. What made this was definitely the necessary kindness from the two of them.

“After that, we always studied together. However, Hayato does have a bad memory. Why do you have to do such a thing, he always grumbled. One day, I told him, if he didn't study well, he wouldn't be able to become a doctor, that he won't be able to save sickly people like me, and I said it like I'm a heroine of a tragedy. However, Hayato really believed it, ‘I'll treat your legs, Chiaki’, he said. Years later, he became what they called the genius boy. Actually, if he really put his mind to it, he could do anything. I really was happy to have such a kid by my side—”

Oh my, you're really an amazing guy, Hayato.

After we went to middle school, he stayed by my side. My personality never changed, so I never made friends. My family even told me off because of this. However, “I’ll always stay by your side. It’s fine not to make any friends. It’s a promise.” I wouldn’t feel sad even though I’m alone. But—this happiness only lasted till middle school.”

Chiaki stammered, and continued,

“When I graduated from middle school, my legs could move slightly. The doctors said there’s a chance. If I did some physiotherapy, my strength and bones might improve and recover. After that, I started to do my recuperation.”

Chiaki stared right at the sunset before her; however, her one showed a slight change.

“My family and Hayato helped me with my recovery, but it was really painful. Whenever I moved my legs, it would hurt. I moved a bit, and I would get giddy. Without anyone else supporting me, I would have given up. I was really happy to be able to hold hands with Hayato. It was with his support that I kept practicing...but.”

Chiaki hesitated for a little while, and finally decided to step into the memories of darkness.

“That day, I was practicing alone outside the house, and a group of passers-by. It’s rare to see someone do some physiotherapy alone, so every time, there would be people looking. It was a little different that day though. Those people mocked me, loud enough for the surrounding people to hear, and they were using me for their own amusement, like they’re watching a doe that was just born.”



Even without looking at the expression covered under the silky hair, I knew very well the humiliation that she suffered.

“I felt that I was being mocked. While I was really unable to take it anymore, ‘good work there, do your best!’, that was what Hayato told me. Back then, I was really happy. I’ll never forget those words.”

Chiaki lamented about the regrets she could never erase, and while facing her, I could not say anything.

“After that, I started to slack off. I was scared, but nobody was forgiving of me. My parents were harsh to me. I started to feel that I failed their love. But even after knowing this, I couldn’t be strong enough to stand up. Anyway, I’m tired, sick of it, and suffering within.”

—But, Chiaki stopped, and muttered his name.

“Only Hayato understood me. I didn’t say anything to him, but he said to me one day ‘I’m sick of it! Let’s play a game’. He suddenly acted weirdly, very unnaturally, and told me to give up on the physiotherapy.”

Naturally, the reason was obvious.

“He sensed that I was being driven to despair, and thus gave me a lifeline. ‘it’s fine for you not to be able to walk. I’ll push the wheelchair for you, so it’s fine’, so he kindly told me. However, my family felt that Hayato doted on me too much, and that’s why I ended up giving up on physiotherapy. We argued over this a lot of times, and none of us could come to an understanding, so I was gradually isolated by my family.”

A sad disagreement of ideas, I couldn’t help but sigh. Nobody’s wrong here. Everyone was thinking for Chiaki’s sake, and yet it ended up with differences.

“But with Hayato beside me, I didn’t feel that it was a pity. He would always stay by my side, so it was fine. I didn’t make any friends, like before, but with him around, I was still able to go to school as normal. However, Hayato—”

Till this point, Chiaki went quiet.

I knew the reason; the cruel future came upon them. Hayato...

“Akitsuki, hold this.”

Chiaki probably did not like this unpleasant atmosphere, or maybe she was concerned about me.

She took out the recorder and earphones, wanting to divert the topic.

“There was a TV drama I used to like. There’s a scene of a couple hearing music through a pair of earphones. I really like that scene.”

“Ah, a lovers’ bond.”

“I never had any interest in music, but I wanted to try it out. I really can’t enjoy music, but I bought a really expensive player.”

With a childish look, Chiaki reminiscence the past.

“But that guy’s really slow. When I said that I wanted to listen with him, guess what he did? He took out the earphones—and said ‘everyone will be able to hear the echoes if we do this’. That’s not what I was getting at. It might be a little exaggeration, but back then, I really felt like my dream was shattered. I couldn’t help but cry.”

Yep, I could imagine that scene.

Why is my partner unable to read the mood?

“But he’s a gentle one. ‘what’s wrong?’, he comforted me as he put on my earphone for me. His breathing was right by my side, and my heart jumped. Even though, those were still wonderful memories for me—”

The pretty eyes seemed to depict the memories as they slowly fell.

“The left phone’s for him.”

“...I see.”

Seeing the sidelong face of a girl in love, my face could not help but sizzle.

I suddenly lifted my head, and looked at the darkening sunset.

What’s going on? Why do I feel so lonely?

I guess it’s because Hayato’s no longer around, that Chiaki and Hayato won’t be able to hold hands again.

Or maybe they weren’t the only ones who couldn’t hold hands again.

Hikari Yumesaki and I too—

“...”

I instinctively moved.

I instinctively removed Chiaki from the wheelchair and carried her like a princess. It’s too dangerous to sit on the wheelchair. You won’t be able to go forward, this allows you to see the beautiful scenery better; I gave such an excuse.



“...Mission three, clear.”

I said, trying to hide my embarrassment.

And then, I carried Chiaki up the slope. Her body's way too light for me.

“...”

Chiaki didn't say anything.

She probably hated it, or was angry. However, the truth was beyond my expectations. Not only that.

—Gu.

“You're rather big.”

“That's what people always tell me.”

“Hayato's...skinny. In elementary school, he was skinnier than me.”

“...I see.”

“...That was my encounter with him.”

I had a lot of pressing issues I wanted to ask Chiaki. Surely she had a lot to say too. However, more importantly, we wanted to look at the setting sun, to be surrounded by this crimson sky.

And so, we didn't say anything.

Just staring at the extinguishing sunset before our eyes with sadness.

Two days later, the weather was fine, and like usual, I visited Chiaki's house.

It was rare to see Chiaki come out, and welcoming me was the nanny. She led me directly to Chiaki's room, and when I entered, I saw her sleeping on the wheelchair, and could not help but wonder, as it fine to leave her be? However, I could not make up my mind on whether to leave, or to stay, so I could only find a place to sit down, and heard her breathing in the quiet room. At the same time, my heart could not calm down, and I could only size up the room.

I guess it was out of barrier-free consideration that there were handrails and other disabled facilities installed all over the room. With the wheelchair however, I guessed these things were meaningless. Of course, this might be some of my useless thoughts. These facilities probably had some other purpose. Also, there's a pair of crutches in the corner of the room, with signs of them being used. I guess it's when she was moving from her wheelchair to some other place.

"...Ah."

I saw the recorder left on the table, hesitated a bit, put on the right earphone, and opened the file 3. The message Hayato left for me was played.

"Hello! I heard from Chiaki that mission 3 is done. You're rather capable. Chiaki looks rather happy herself. Now then, it's time for mission 4...can you give me some time? I'll tell you soon. Just to note, the difficulty you shoot up from now! So prepare yourself!"

"What are you trying to make us do here, you prince charming?"

I grimaced as I took off the earphone, and suddenly thought of the prank.

Again, I put on the earphone, and this time, I opened file 1. Sorry Chiakin, but blame yourself for sleeping so carelessly. You watched our exchange diary, so let's make this even.

I tried to talk myself into this as I heard a cute voice from the earphone.

It was a soft, clear voice. I closed my eyes, imagining Chiaki's expression as she recorded the message.

Surely, I believed, it was a blissful look.

"Hayato, good morning. How's the body? Don't force yourself. The medicine's on the table."

"Akitsuki came by today. Mission three is done. He's tall and big, and easily carried me. He's so massive, yet so gentle. A fine person."

"Remember to keep this a secret from Akitsuki and Yumesaki. I heard from Akitsuki that he does like Yumesaki. Hm hm, I win this bet. Try asking Yumesaki how she views Akitsuki then. Let's matchmake them like a TV drama. Not a bad idea, isn't it."

"Hayato, I'm really glad to be your childhood friend. This shall be the end. Good night. Do work hard today too. From Chiaki."

However, the peaceful days did not last.

Two days later, Hayato suddenly stopped sending messages to Chiaki.

## CUT 4 – TOMORROW, SHE WILL DIE. HE WILL REVIVE.

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“Hm, so that’s how things are, huh?”

On a certain frigid day.

“I tried asking Hayato, but it seems he has difficulty saying something. As expected, Chiakin never went to school.”

Seeing the report Hikari Yumesaki left behind for me, I could not help but lower my face.

Two days ago, I wrote all of Chiaki’s past on my notebook, “Mind checking if Chiaki went to school?” and even requested Hikari Yumesaki to do that. The simple reason being, I could not tell if Chiaki went to school.

Lots of misfortune happened to Chiaki, and she thus lost many friends, other than Hayato. She did once regain the chance to walk away, but she lost to the pessimism within her heart, and kept running away. It’s because Hayato was with her however that she was fine. So Chiaki said.

But given that Hayato died, what happened to Chiaki after that?

I could tell on first look that she could not walk, and that she did not practice at all. What about friends? She mentioned that she once attended high school with Hayato, but what about her at this point? To understand the situation, I wanted to know if she attended school...if she’s not going, that’s not a good thing.

“Hayato seems to have his own thoughts. He said ‘it may be my fault that Chiaki didn’t go to school’...”

“What’s going on?”



I could understand that ever since Hayato, whom she so relied on was not around, there was a lack of motivation for Chiaki to attend school. It's a little too ridiculous for her to not attend school though. The reason why Hayato felt that he should bear some responsibility was because he told Chiaki that he would always be with her, and yet he went on his way before her. I could understand Hayato's thoughts, but he did not die completely, became Chiaki's other half, and even knew of the way to revive.

But despite this, he claimed that it's his responsibility. What's going on?

Also, that was not the only thing that concerned me. I remember that when I met Chiaki, she said this,

*–Due to 'a certain reason', I decided not to make friends anymore.*

I understood those words, and yet I didn't. Chiaki said that she started to avoid interacting with other due to her leg issues, but I felt that was not all.

But even if I continued to groan in agony, I couldn't sort it out. Let's end this for the day.

Thinking that, I closed the notebook, and got ready to go to school. However, it was only later on that I knew of the answer.

It was after school when the incident happened, revealing a cruel truth.

"Ah, it's so cold."

On this day, after school, I dallied around on the train for an hour, and walked for another fifteen minutes before arriving at Chiaki's mansion. The room's a little dim, probably because the lights were not on.

"It's gone...why didn't Hayato pack everything properly...goodness!"

Once I entered, I found Chiakin flipping rummaging the drawers. She seemed to be in a bad mood.

“What’s wrong?”

“Ah, Akitsuki. My voice recorder and earphones are gone. Where did he put them?”

Ah, I often encountered such situations myself. That Hikari Yumesaki would never pack anything up after taking them out for use. Every time I wake up, I have to clean up after her.

“Write a note? Ask ‘where did you put them, you idiot!’ or something.”

“Hm...looks like I can only do that...”

Chiaki answered despondently. It looked like she was despondent over not hearing Hayato’s message.

“...Ah.”

And while I had such a thought, Chiaki looked at me, muttering,

“Without the voice recorder...you can’t get your mission, riht?”

“Eh? Ah, well, it’s fine. It’s probably some strange mission again.”

I wanted to know the way to revive Hikari Yumesaki, and so Hayato prepared a bunch of strange missions for me. At this point, I’ve completed the third mission, but Hayato did not inform of anything beyond this. No, I guess the mission to make friends still wasn’t complete, but nevertheless, I did do half of them. If possible, I hoped that I could continue to mission on this day, but we’re in a rut as the voice recorder’s gone. Kazeshiro would tell me off, asking if I found any clues, but that’ll be down to Hayato not informing me of the mission...I guess.

Suddenly, there was the sound of the doorbell from the corridor. It appeared the nanny wasn't around for the day, and I suggested that I would go open the door, only to be refused politely by Chiaki. The latter struggled to roll the wheelchair towards the corridor near the room, and I could only wait inside, as I had nothing to do.

I heard the door open, and some soft whispers came.

"Hello. This is what the teacher wanted me to hand over. You still can't go to school yet, Chiakin? You won't have enough attendance if you take leave every alternate days, you know?"

Hm? Sent over?

After that, I heard Chiaki give her thanks. It seemed to be the class representative who came by to visit Chiaki, absent from school. What, a friend—I didn't know if that was the case, but isn't the class representative being too nice here? Goodness, isn't this too caring towards someone who refused to go to school? I never had anyone approach me, let alone try to woo me. Seriously, kids these days.

While I was having wild thoughts.

"But at this point, it isn't appropriate for you to come to school."

"...Hm?"

The tone in the voice changed—before I could continue thinking, the words left me shivering.

"It's because of you that Hyuuga died."

"—!!"

...Huh?

Hyuuga. If I remembered, it's the family name of Hayato. Eh...he died because of Chiaki?

No no no, what's she saying? Didn't Hikari Yumesaki say that Hayato said that he died during club activities because he had a heart attack? Hayato...

"..."

Maybe—

A certain premonition filled my mind. At the same time, chatting could be heard from the corridor.

"Hey, you know, don't you? Everyone loves Hyuuga, but you took him. You stayed in hospital, and Hyuuga wanted to visit you at the hospital, but got caught in the accident. There's no need to say who's at fault here, right?"

"...I'm sorry."

Chiaki could be heard apologizing, and so I understood.

I had been wondering how weird it was. Hayato hardly gave me any information, and even though we had some issues we were curious about, we could only ask Chiaki. The only false intel that guy told us—was his cause of death. Only at this point did I realize. In other words...this was the only thing we weren't allowed to ask Chiaki.

"Hey, you know why I'm telling you off, right?"

At the corridor, the chiding of Chiaki continued on.

"Besides, you will act like usual tomorrow, and forget everything, right? And then you'll say something like 'Hayato's death has nothing to do with me. He just died on his own accord'. Do you know how much these words anger us!? Do you!?"

“...I’m sorry. It’s all my fault...”

Once I heard Chiaki’s words, I inadvertently felt cold sweat trickle down my back. Ahh...Hayato did say that it’s because of him that Chiaki didn’t go to school. So that’s how it was.

‘He just died on his own accord’. Even if Chiaki did make a mistake, there was no way she would say such words. In other words, the one saying those words would be the other Chiaki, Hayato on the inside, Chiaki on the outside. Seeing how he said such words while having the appearance of Chiaki who was already hated...there was no way she could show up at school.

“Hey! Look at me! Say something!”

The sudden lashing me shocked me, while I still had my head down in thought. It looked like the guest was rather agitated. Also, I could hear sobbing. Was Chiaki crying—

“Ahh, ahem! Ahem!”

I started coughing without thinking, the voice coming through the open door, loud enough to be heard from the corridor.

I then summoned my courage, and poked my head out from the door. Appearing in my eyes was a gloomy looking girl. Well...I didn’t have the right to comment, but she really had a terrifying appearance. However, I wasn’t scared. If it’s just terrifying, I wouldn’t lose to anyone. At such a moment, I should be protecting Chiaki. I had to say some cool, delinquent-like words to scare her...let’s see. Delinquent words...delinquent...

“L-let’s take a two-shot!”

Ahh! That damn Mohawk, all because of him that my words don't have any threat now!

But it seemed this was rather effective against this unfamiliar girl. After meeting me in the eyes, her raging face started to show fear. And then—

“Th-that'll be all I have to say. See you at school.”

My face had a complete victory. This stranger reverted back to a kind expression, said some earnest words, and left. Great, everything went well. B-but,

Chiaki wouldn't move at all, so I could only push the wheelchair back into her room. I saw her bloodshot eyes. I guess she cried...such harsh words were said to her after all.

“...Sorry.”

“No, it's nothing...”

In such situations, I guess Kazeshiro might say some words to calm her down. Too bad I'm not Kazeshiro. Anyway, I could not say anything, only silence.

This painful atmosphere continued for a little while.

“Akitsuki, do you still remember? What I asked you when we first met—”

“Eh.”

What she asked me? I remembered that was...

—Half of your lifespan was taken by Hikari Yumesaki.

—Do you still have any regrets about it?

“...I do.”

And I remembered what happened after that. That—pained look of yours.

“I’m very regretful. About how I have him trapped inside this injured body of mine.”

Chiaki said, and opened a drawer, taking a photo from within.

On the photo was Chiaki, looking unhappy, and a boy beaming away, hugging her from behind. Ah, that cheeky face as I had expected.

“It happened in May this year. The condition of my eyes worsened, and I had to stay in the hospital for a while. It was painful for me as I was tormented by illness, but Hayato kept visiting me every day, so I didn’t think it was much. The nurse asked if he was my boyfriend, and I was really happy. However, that day—”

Chiaki stopped at this point. However, she summoned her courage, and continued on,

“That day, it was already past visiting hours, and Hayato never came by. I thought he was late. I saw an ambulance drive in. It’s a hospital, so it wasn’t a rare sight. I didn’t think it was much, so I kept waiting for him, but he never showed up. Of course, I never expected the one inside the ambulance to be him. It was tens of minutes later that I heard the nurses say that the boy who always came by to visit was on the brink of death—”

“Chiaki....”

Her expression got increasingly despondent.

“...Back then, I cursed at my own tragic fate like never before. It was fine even if I couldn’t run, that I could see him for the last time. It was the punishment the Heavens had for me, for me not practicing my walking. I never thought things would end up this way. I never thought I would

regret this so much. After hearing of his demise, I was so remorseful that I could not cry out tears.”

With a parched voice, Chiaki continued on,

“When I was crouched in the ward room, I met a black robe person. He forced me into answering if I was willing to use half of my lifespan, and I did so without hesitation. After that, I thought, what was that about? But back then, I didn’t think much about it, until it was dawn. When I woke up, a day passed. I thought my mind was crazy. This continued on for a week however, and I then realized this was what he meant by giving up half my lifespan. I left a message for Hayato with a voice recorder, and everything was clear. After that, we started living with two minds in one body. But—”

At this moment, Chiaki stopped.

“But?”

“I was scared, scared if Hayato hated me.”

—Eh?

“Because I kept him in this body that’s hard to move in. He definitely hated me, so I thought, and it scared me.”

No no no, this definitely wasn’t it, right?

It’s true that Hayato had been living in a healthy body the entire time, and surely was inconvenienced at this point. But no matter what, he did get saved, right? At first, I was worried that Hikari Yumesaki would have hated me for imprisoning her in this delinquent body. However, she later told me that it’s great to be living in my body. I guess Hayato’s probably the same.

“Hayato said to me, Thank you for giving up half your lifespan for me.”



“So—”

“But I knew. What he really thought was...”

“Eh...”

“After I was discharged from the hospital, I went to school. Waiting for me at school were voices of pity towards because of Hayato—and voices of hatred. It’s common amongst girls. It’s to be expected that responsibility is pushed upon me when a popular guy visits this hated me and ends up dead in an accident.”

...

“I began to hate going to school, but Hayato was worried about my attendance, and still insisted on going to school. What awaited him at school however was blame for him. He couldn’t help but bicker back, and he’s not at fault. However, he’s still human. One day, I heard his voice recording, and I was shocked. ‘It’s painful’, ‘there are some painful memories—’ he grumbled...it’s to be expected since Hayato’s human; there’s no way he can keep smiling the entire time...however, I actually let that energetic Hayato be faulted, that he would say such words despite always showing a smile on his face.”

Chiaki gave a regretful look, and complained,

“I really regretted letting the one I like suffer so much. I had enough of it all. Hayato apologized to me, saying that he won’t say such a thing. That’s not what I meant though. Hayato’s not wrong. I was remorseful of letting him suffer such blame. I really regretted imprisoning him in this immobile body...”

“—But!”

I interrupted.

I guessed I did not want to see Chiaki continue to give that painful look, or maybe I just wanted to latch onto some hope.

“There’s still a way to revive, right? Isn’t that okay?”

I had a vague feeling, a premonition, but I asked.

The truth of the world I did not know of.

“...Well, I’ll tell you everything. The price—to revive.”

“Price...”

The word weighed heavily on me.

“Hayato kept seeking a way to revive. It’s to be expected, right. If he can revive, it’s for the best. Once he knew his time has shortened by five minutes, Hayato got more anxious. And then one day, he found a clue to the revival—‘Atelier Journal’.”

‘Atelier Journal’. I mumble this term to myself a few times.

“We studied at a high school with lots of history, and there’s a lot of strange rumors. One of them was this: ‘there were two girls who were on great terms in the art club, but one of them died in an accident. The remaining girl would then do similar actions to the dead girl. Later on, before anyone knew it, the remaining girl disappeared completely and ended up like the dead girl. Hayato was curious about that rumor, and did his best to collect all the information. Then, he finally found that the duo shared the Atelier, and the Journal left there. The Journal left behind there was like us, a phenomenon of people switching personalities.”

I gulped.

A Journal left behind by people who shared the same experiences as us, the future we would reach written on them —

“We didn’t know how they managed to know the method of revival, but there was the method clearly written there. There’s only one method to let the soul living in the body remain on this world.”

Then, Chiaki told me the truth of the world I sought so much, and revealed a cruel truth.

“That method — is to destroy the soul of the host, and have the other one live on. In other words, only when giving up your soul or mine, Akitsuki, and vanishing, Hayato or Yumesaki will continue to live on with the husks we leave behind...”

“.....I see.”

Faced with the cruel truth, I calmly answered.

...I realized it. When the black-robed person called, asking for my entire lifespan, I started to doubt. Also, Hayato did not revive, and would not tell us how to. I had a gut feeling about his puzzling actions.

Hikari Yumesaki could only be revived — through my death.

“...You don’t seem surprised at all.”

“I already expected this to happen. So, in other words, the two who wrote the journal chose to let the one residing in the body live on, at the price of the remaining lifespan of the original host.

“Hm...”

Following that was unnerving silence. However, I had to get something clear.

“...What are the steps to reviving?”

I prepared myself mentally, and asked this question. However, Chiaki shook her head.

“Only Hayato read the journal. He told me the price to revive, but never told me how to, and the journal was hidden by him somewhere. All I know is that one of us has to disappear. I know why he only told me this much. Anyone can understand what he’s trying to do.”

Yep, there’s only one answer.

“Once he knew that this was the only method to revive, he was really dejected. And so, he said, ‘I’ve decided. I’m going to make you happy’. Hayato gave up on reviving. If he wanted to revive, he would have to use my life as the price. Even if he did revive, he would have to be constrained in my immobile body, take the hatred from the people around me, and have countless suffering. That’s why he chooses not to do anything, and just vanish. He never told me the method to revive because he did not think there’s no need for it. And in the end, he decided to ‘fulfil his wishes’.”

“Fulfill his wishes...”

I gently muttered the lonely words of the person who was going to vanish.

“Back then, when he made the promise with me ‘I’ll always be with you, so it’s fine not to make any friends’. He can no longer fulfil this promise, so he started looking for friends for my sake, a friend that will take his place to remain by me, to support me. After that, he found you. He discovered you, called you over, gave you those missions. All these—for my sake.”

—Mission one! First, be friends with Chiaki!

I recalled the voice recording from Hayato. Back then, I was wondering, what was this guy saying. It was a critical moment, and I was forced to do such a strange mission. However, this was all planning for the world where he no longer existed. What feelings did Hayato have when he entrusted me with those missions...

"But I don't want this. I don't want to lose Hayato. If Hayato will disappear all because I made a friend, I'm not going to. I can't make friends. If I do, Hayato will vanish. I can't accept this..."

"Chiaki..."

The tears could not stop flowing.

"I'm at a loss. What can I do? I don't want Hayato to die. I can't live alone. But I can't let myself die and have him locked in this body. I can't force this painful life on him. I don't know what I can do...!"

The tears, filled with agitated emotions, trickled down Chiaki's cheeks. Those tears had an endless sorrow.

Left in the room was Chiaki's sobbing. All I could do was to lower my head in silence.

That day, I waited for Chiaki to cry her heart out, and returned home only at sunset.

"I can't mention this to her..."

I finally knew of the method to revive Hikari Yumesaki on this day. However, this method was vastly different from what we had expected. I requested Chiaki not to say it to Hikari Yumesaki first. I guess Hayato

wouldn't either. However, it's only a matter of time. One day, I would have to explain everything to her.

Also, Chiaki and Hayato had their own troubles. To be honest, those were beyond what I could manage. I never thought Hayato would be shouldering such a heavy burden.

"Damn it..."

And so, I went to sleep without writing down anything that happened on this day. Two days later,

"Hayatocchi seemed a little strange. Something happened, right?"

I had a look at the forlorn journal entry, and could not help but lower my head. Then,

"Are you okay, Sakamoto? You don't seem energetic in your journal entry."

"I'm probably bad at lying, I guess."

I made Hikari Yumesaki worry. Still, I failed.

The next moment, I received a message on the cellphone, but I had already expected that. 'From Hayatocchi' I opened it, and the opening read, 'This message is set to be sent automatically. If I'm right, this mail will be sent to you when you wake up, Akicchi. You get what I mean?'

"Yep. Keep it a secret, right?"

Hayato contacted me directly, and not through Hikari Yumesaki or Chiaki. In other words, he wanted me to keep this a secret from those two.

I continued reading, and the long message contained the wishes Hayato had,

“It seemed Chiaki told you a lot. This is as I had expected, so it’s fine. I haven’t told Hikari Yumesaki anything, so do relax. I have a lot of things I want to say to you, but unfortunately, I don’t have much time. I’ll go straight to the point; explaining it again, the one way to let me remain on this world is to erase Chiaki’s soul through some other means, and that I have to occupy Chiaki’s body. If not, the time I spend in the body will whittle little by little, until the soul vanishes.”

Hayato repeated the truth Chiaki told me. As expected...there was no other way out.

“You have realized it, haven’t you? I do intend to vanish. This is the reason why I did not tell Chiaki the way to revive me. It’s just that, there are some things I want to fulfill before I die.”

Fulfill. Chiaki too said such a word that frustrated me.

“It is because I pampered Chiaki that she’s no longer practicing how to walk. However, I am already dead. I can’t head off to the afterlife peacefully if I don’t settle these issues. So Akicchi, the fourth mission I’m giving you is—‘make Chiaki smile’.”

“Hayato...”

“I did say it before, didn’t I? The difficulty will spike at four. I’m sorry for getting you guys involved, but I have no other way out. Please, Akicchi, help me out here.”

That night, I wrote quite a long journal entry.

I wrote everything about Chiaki’s regrets, and Hayato’s request. And then, I wrote,

**“Chiaki told me the method to revive Hayato. I don’t know the specifics, but it looks like it involves erasing Chiaki’s soul and leaving Hayato’s soul in Chiaki’s body. In other words, one of Hayato or Chiaki has to vanish.”**

**“ ... ”**

**“Hayato intends to let himself vanish, but until then, he can’t leave peacefully without seeing Chiaki’s smile. Let’s think of a way to help out. I don’t know what to do at all, but I want to do what I can.”**

**“ ...Hah.”**

I let out a sigh, and again looked at the journal entry I wrote.

Hikari Yumesaki probably would understand what this journal entry meant. Us making Chiaki smile meant that we were to finish Hayato’s wishes, and accept his death. In other words...we had to let Chiaki accept his death.

And another thing.

The cruel future awaiting them would also be the future awaiting us. In other words, either Hikari Yumesaki or I would have to vanish. However, I still could not focus on our future yet. At this point, we needed to help Chiaki and Hayato, the ones who reached their tragic fates before us.

**“It has to be her. If it’s Hikari Yumesaki, she’ll definitely be able to do it.”**

I tried to think, but I could not think of anything to help Chiaki and Hayato.

But if it’s Hikari Yumesaki.

For her, who always wanted to be the hero.

Surely, she would be able to find a solution. That was how I was saved by Hikari Yumesaki.



**“I believe that you can do it, definitely.”** I wrote at the bottom of the journal entry, and laid on the bed.

“Please do it, Hikari Yumesaki.”

Two days later. I endured the bone-chilling cold, crept towards the table, and opened the journal that was placed neatly on the table.

Shown in my eyes were Hikari Yumesaki’s — kindness and strength.

“I’ve read it all. Looks like Chiakin and Hayato had quite the painful experience. I too agree with your decision, Sakamoto. Let’s use Hikari and Sakamoto’s power to help them out!”

“Yep...that’s it.”

I knew you would say that.

“Leave it to me, Sakamoto! Let’s show them that Sexy Dream’s not for show! Hikari here as a real — — — — —ly potent plan!”

“This girl...as to be expected of her! Hikari Yumesaki!”

She’s being energetic, and anyone reading would not help but smile. As I read on, I nearly shed tears. It’s great to encounter you.

The rest of the journal entry never mentioned anything about our future. However, it’s certain that she definitely had some thoughts about it. She definitely knew how cruel the future before us was.

But despite this, Hikari Yumesaki prioritized saving Chiaki and Hayato. Even in such a situation, she continued to prioritize taking action for Hayato, and putting her future at the backseat.

Now that, what I want to do was—

“I’ll definitely do this, Hikari Yumesaki.”

You and I, a unique combination, two personalities in one body.

This final shared operation began.

“Right, let’s get down to revising.”

It was after school. I laid out the journal before me, and reread the plan to save Chiaki, which Hikari Yumesaki wrote down.

“Hayato said that the first step is to let Chiaki walk after all. He wants to see Chiaki’s determination. If she can’t do that, there’s nothing we can say.”

“Yep. I see. So Chiaki has to work hard after all.”

If Chiaki is to smile, then she has to change. She has to be stronger, so that Hayato can relax. To send Hayato off, to do all these, we had to first change Chiaki’s thoughts.

But it’s not easy for Chiaki to change when she bore such a heavy, aching heart. Besides,

“It’s impossible for Chiaki to walk again, right?”

Chiaki mentioned that she had issues with her legs.

Her legs could move slightly back during middle school, and if she did her physiotherapy, she might be able to walk a little. However, this would be possible only through consistent practice. It was not simply a matter of determination and enthusiasm, if the bones and physical body were not

strong enough, every bit of hard work would be for naught. Even if I were to suddenly tell Chiaki to ‘get up and walk’, it would be impossible for her.

However, it seemed Hikari Yumesaki had an idiot.

“I guess you might be worried about Chiakin’s legs here, but you don’t have to worry about this. By going according to this plan, Chiakin will definitely be able to walk!”

I kept reading.

“...Well, it’s plausible. Theoretically, Chiaki should be able to walk.”

To be honest, I didn’t think that the plan would go well, but in fact, this was the only method we had. I guessed it’s a sure bet to put my faith on Hikari Yumesaki and Hayato’s plan.

“First, two days later—it’ll probably be tomorrow for you, Sakamoto. Hayato and I will carry out ‘that plan’. The important thing is the operation on the second day, and I hope that you’ll do your best then. If it goes well, the operation will start the moment you switch out for me, Sakamoto. You need to prepare yourself.”

I continued to navigate my way through the operation.

Tomorrow, and the day after. This major operation would take two days. Even after thinking about it, I felt that it was really difficult. The operation Hikari Yumesaki would be in charge of the next day was difficult, but the operation I was in charge of two days later would be all the more difficult.

“But—no other way but to just do it.”

At this point, there’s no point if there’s so success. I got Hikari Yumesaki in action, so I had to let this operation succeed.

“And also, to let this operation succeed, you need something else. This super duper important item has to be prepared by you, Sakamoto.”

“OK. Then I’ll get it ready then.”

I answered, and looked at the ‘item to be prepared’ column, muttering,

“‘Video Camera’, huh?”

Where do I get one?

“Video camera? On the table.”

And so,

There was no need to buy such a pricey item — so I thought as I went to Yukiko’s room. It seemed Yukiko earned quite a fair bit from writing novels, and bought all kinds of crazy spy equipment like cameras, bugs and such. I didn’t know what exactly she was planning to use them for, but I hardly bothered with her anyway.

“So, how do I use this?”

“Uu...as expected, I need Akiboshi to kiss...eh, what did you say?”

No, nothing.

I guess it’s almost the deadline for Yukiko, as she was seated before the computer, looking ever so serious. I guess I should leave without disturbing here. I would probably understand how to use it after playing with it for a bit.

“It’s nothing. Do your best then.”

“Hm...but I can’t bring myself to erase the Yukio’s assault scene...uu.”

I left a few greetings, retreated to my room, and switched the camera on. Erm, there should be a memory card inside, I guess. I supposed I should try using it, and then erase them.

“Hm?”

Right when I had this thought—huh? It seemed there was some data inside already. Not too long...well, let's have a look. Use this data as practice.

I was about to start recording.

“Erm, first, press the play button.”

At this moment, I should have put in more thought into this.

“Ohh. It's playing. Where's the volume? Let's increase the video quality—”

And appearing in the video was a footage of my little sister, being very different from her usual personality as she held onto a video camera.

“Hm? This is...Yukiko's room?”

What exactly was—

*“The-there's something I've always wanted to tell you.”*

“Huh? What?”

For some reason, Yukiko was wearing a very revealing negligee in the visual, seated opposite the camera in an alluring manner, saing something alone.

*“I-I guess this might be too sudden for you. Bu-but, Yu-Yukiko can't hold back anymore. Yukiko always, always...”*

“Always?”

Her troubled face was blazing red. And coming out from her adorable lips were —

*“B-brother, I-I’ve always... —”*

“WOOOOOOOOOOOAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHH!?! Forget about it!!!!!!!!!!!!!!Brother!! Don’t loooooooooookkkk!!?”

At that moment, a strange sound that shook the house echoed, and Yukiko barged into my room, looking as despondent as a Major League Baseball who learned that the team was eliminated from playoff contention.

“Y-yo-yo-yo-you didn’t see it, did you!? You didn’t see it, right?”

“Eh? No, I was just trying this. That was —”

“Th-the-then don’t look! Return the memory card to me right now! That card has ‘Yukirin’s Confession Practice Video: Version 8.11!’”

E-eight? Eh, con-confession?

After a whole lot of buzzing, Yukiko left the room.

I weakly inserted the new memory card Yukiko shoved to me, and checked the operation. Hm, right. Now then, tomorrow’s operation should be a success.

“...Now then, the preparations should be complete.”

If the operation went well as expected, time would be of the essence. The moment I woke up—no, the moment Hikari Yumesaki swapped places with me, the mission would begin.

“It’s fine. This will definitely succeed. Definitely.”

I opened the notebook, and wrote a message for Hikari Yumesaki.

“Do your best, Hikari Yumesaki. This will be —our final battle.”

My consciousness suddenly awoke.

“Ah....eh...”

I was outside, in the darkness. The cold air left my body freezing. For a moment, I did not know what happened, but soon after, I did.

“I say, what’s going on here!? What the heck!?”

Chiaki was collapsed before me, looking all confused as she shouted. There was no wheelchair nearby to be seen, and she only had two crutches beside me. Looking at Chiaki, I recalled everything. It seemed everything went well on her side.

“Yumesaki! Why am I in such a place!? Answer me!”

“...it’s no longer Hikari Yumesaki now, Chiaki.”

I looked at the note in my right hand, and written on it was,

“Operation success, Sakamoto! Everything’s done! Now it’s all up to you!”

“Yep. Nice going.”

Also, there’s one more line.

“Show me your strength now.”

I smiled, and stuffed the note into my pocket. Chiaki was completely confused by the situation before her. I looked at her, and it’s normal for her to be shocked. It’s 4.29am, the time I swapped places with Hikari Yumesaki, and five minutes after Chiaki swapped places with Hayato.

It's outdoors, with nobody around. Chiaki was shocked, probably because she found herself outdoors once she woke up. Her conversation with Hikari Yumesaki probably lasted only five minutes, but it seemed they did not interact much.

"Chiaki, I guess you probably won't understand what's going on when it happened to so suddenly. Don't worry though. Hayato understood."

"Wh-what do you much?"

I looked up at the moon awaiting the dawn, and my eyes finally got used to the dim environment. Chiaki probably was the same, and it seemed she understood where she was, her expression looking increasingly confused as a result.

"This is...Hayato and I..."

Right. It's the very special place for you two—the top of the hill overlooking the sea, where the sunset's so pretty.

"Chiaki, Hayato told me the next mission. We created this situation to complete that."

"Wh-what are you saying...what are you trying to do...?"

Chiaki asked in confusion, while I pondered over how to explain this clearly for her to understand. Well, whatever, just tell her directly.

"Chiaki, from now on, you're going to be walking on your own."

"Huh—"

I turned my back on the crescent moon sinking into the west, saying this. Even in darkness, I could tell that Chiaki's face was filled with shock and despair as she groaned,



“The fourth mission I got from Hayato was to make you smile. In other words, to make you accept Hayato’s death. We’re trying to get you to walk alone, to stand up strong, and send Hayato off with a smile...but you’re not going to be obedient even if we tell you to go, right? That’s why we created a situation for you to walk by yourself no matter what.”

“Ah...!”

It seemed Chiaki had understood the situation somewhat, as the shock on her face soon gave way to anger.

“You wouldn’t listen to me...so you used Hayato’s time to...”

“That’s basically it.”

The strategy Hikari Yumesaki basically came up with was to time the moment Chiaki swapped places with Hayato, and create a situation where Chiaki had no choice but to walk—in other words, outdoors without a wheelchair.. It seemed Hikari Yumesaki carried Hayato over here, and waited for them to swap around. In such a situation, Chiaki would have to follow what I had to say.

“Look Chiaki. As you said, Hayato wanted to die. But, in that message he sent me, he said he’s not going to die this easily. He’s not going to die peacefully if you’re still so weak. Walk on, Chiaki. Let him pass on with peace.”

“Wh-what are you saying...”

Chiaki’s voice was a mix of confusion and rage, and I could tell that she was gritting her head. She probably hated the fact that I was looking down at her. She stared at me, and lashed out,

“Don’t say that Hayato wants to die! And...I can’t move even if you ask me to walk! Didn’t I say so already!? My legs can’t move if I don’t do my physiotherapy! You got to be kidding!”

“I’m not kidding. If you want to go home—”

I said, and moved twenty meters away from Chiaki, opening up a distance. Well, this should be fine. I could see the streets everywhere from here. I walked to the ledge, and turned around.

“Walk here by yourself. After this, I’ll carry you home.”

“That’s...”

Under the chilling darkness of the sky before the dawn.

I could tell what Chiaki was thinking from her face of despair. She hurriedly ruffled through the pocket of her shirt, but naturally, the cellphone wasn’t here. We were already prepared for this.

“It’s useless even if you yell right now. You know the surroundings well; few people around, and it’s still so early. That’s why we chose this time, this place.”

“Ugh...”

Chiaki probably understood that I would not budge, and her face gave way to a teary expression. She was probably regretting it, feeling regretful at her helplessness, only to be able to follow the words of others.

I just felt that I was doing something despicable. It’s really too despicable to be dragging her into such a situation with a reason being ‘because the guy you like hope so’. But,

I believe. That you won't give up here. You're a girl who'll definitely be able to do it as long as you put your mind to it. You always lost to the obstacle before, and tried running away many times. But no matter what, you always tried to fight.

Even though you can't walk freely ever since you were born, you continued to live your life enthusiastically.

You forgave Hayato, who kept bullying you.

You tried practicing on your own, wanting to walk.

And—you gave up half your lifespan to save Hayato.

The reason why you're always regretting is because the cruel world is always blocking your way. Once you lost, you cried, over and over again. Even so, you did try to fight on, and lost many times. Hayato likes you because he witnessed this. That's why he agreed to this operation.

You said that you really regretted it, didn't you, Chiaki.

You said that you couldn't see Hayato one last time because you never practiced your walking. You said that you trapped Hayato in this body. Then...having experienced all these, you should be able to understand.

If you don't work hard now, you'll regret this for the rest of your life. Regret is the punishment for not working hard.

So, no matter what, I—

"Chiaki! You're the same as how I used to be!"

Chiaki showed a teary face as she lifted her face at it.

Under the crescent moon that was about to vanish, I shouted at that feeble self—the past me.

“Back then, I thought that the world was terrifying, that I couldn’t do anything alone. Every day, I was grumbling, scared of changing the status quo, and blaming misfortune on everything else. Someone though saved me from that, and changed me. It’s her, Hikari Yumesaki, she brought me here!”

Chiaki remained unmoved, so I did my best to show a smiling face, and shouted,

“That girl never cared about my opinions, and always pulled me from the shadows in practically forceful methods. She-she’s no doubt my ‘light’. However, such a person was once dejected, unable to stand up again.”

I recalled the night with the full moon. It was mid autumn, and on that day, Madam Hinako and I made a promise—

“Back then, I realized that to save a person, to reach out to someone, that’s such a difficult thing to do. However, Hikari Yumesaki easily dragged me out into the sunlight. I’ll never be able to beat her in my life, but I did change. I can’t beat her, but I got stronger. That’s why I’m going to show her that I’m strong enough to save others!”

We’re all weak, but we can be stronger. We’re not alone; there’s always someone we can lean our backs on, supporting us. Even though we’re in this cruel world, we’re able to smile. We need to prove this to them.

“Walk to me! Don’t worry, you can walk! Doesn’t matter how much time you need! Show us your determination!”

I opened my arms wide, shouting with a smile. I believed Chiaki would stand up. I believed she would fight.

“I can’t do it...”

But.

"Isn't it obvious that I can't do it...I'm not as strong as you are...I'm always giving up, pessimistic, trying to run away. I'm a...weak person..."

Chiaki lowered her head deeply, tears dripping onto the ground. She was weak, fleeting.

Hayato surely was not willing to see Chiaki in such a state. Surely he would not leave Chiaki alone like this. Even when he was about to die at this point, he was still regretting, asking me for help.

Then, I,

"No, you can still fight! I know! You're not so honest! What happened to that Chiaki with that twisted personality who turned me all around!? Show me that arrogance of yours again! Show me that strong feistiness of yours!"

I shouted in Hayato's stead. I believed Chiaki would surely be able to stand up again.

"That's impossible! You know, don't you!? Even if you suddenly force me to walk, my legs can't move! Please, help me out! I'm not fooling around, I really can't do it! Help me!"

Chiaki's ached voice nearly touched my heart. But at this moment, I could only stand by the sidelines.

"I'm not going to help you. If you don't fight on, Hayato's not going to pass on with a peace of mind."

"He won't! Hayato won't die! I-I'll die instead!"

"Do you intend to trap Hayato in this body?"

"Th-this..."

Chiaki went silent. She could not make a decision. I understood this, but I still had to ask. I felt that I was an annoying guy, but Chiaki had to make a decision at this point.

“There’s only one choice here! This cruel future’s approaching little by little, and one day, it’s going to be right before you! You have to make a decision! Hayato decided to die! You got to respond to his decision! This is the mission of the living! Why don’t you understand?”

“...But...but...”

Tears finally flowed out.

The tears were reflected under the moonlight, twinkling. That pitiful sight of hers was clear for all to see.

“I can’t do it...I can’t walk...no matter what...”

“No, you can.”

“I can’t! I—”

“It’s not impossible! You can! You just don’t have the courage!”

Because, because, just yesterday—

“Hayato walked here yesterday!!”

“Eh—”

I roared, and heaved a long sigh.

I flipped over the backpack that was over my shoulder, and took out the video camera inside.

Hikari Yumesaki left me a note that stated the operation was a success. If everything went to plan, there’s definitely a video recording.

“Look.”

I walked towards Chiaki, and played the recording for her to watch.

“You’re kidding...you’re kidding, right...”

“I’m not. Clearly this was you yesterday.”

Chiaki’s profile appeared on the video. The date was yesterday, the location being where we currently were.

The Chiaki from the prior day—Hayato was walking on his own legs.

“Why...you’re kidding...how’s that possible...”

With Hayato’s cameraman—Hikari Yumesaki cheering on, Hayato slowly moved forward, one step at a step.

He was holding crutches, but he was certainly was walking on his two legs. Even in the middle of the harsh winter, he was moving forward, step by step. He gritted his teeth, looking forward. His breathing was erratic, but he was smiling—

“Do you know why Hayato’s able to walk?”

“Did he...?”

Chiaki’s legs could not move freely if she did not do her physiotherapy. However, this footage clearly showed Chiaki walking. The reason’s simple. She couldn’t move if she didn’t practice, so in other words,

“Half a year ago, ever since the day when Hayato was reborn and lived in your body...he had been secretly doing physiotherapy, never slacking off in

his efforts. It's all for the sake to making sure it works when you want to walk one day."

"—!"

I had found it strange for quite a while. Thinking hard about it, this was the strange part.

Chiaki said that she could not move her legs, but her legs did not appear to be that skinny. Also, she did say her legs would ache from time to time, but that was just some normal muscular pain, was it not? I did have such issues of the symptoms flaring up the next day.

Also, there were other issues; the pair of crutches placed in a corner of the room seemed suspicious too. Chiaki said that she had never used the crutches before, but the tips seemed worn out, and the scars on the crutches seemed somewhat fresh. In other words, the crutches had been used recently. Chiaki was so traumatized that she was unwilling to look at the crutches, and thus, never noticed it.

Also, there were railings for recuperating purposes installed all over Chiaki's house, with signs of them being used. She typically used her wheelchair, but it was clear that the railings showed signs of being used, and that's suspicious. Surely, the railings were used by Hayato to practice walking. There was basically no one else in Chiaki's house, and because of that, nobody noticed Hayato practicing how to walk. I guess it's amazing that Hayato's able to train to this extent. It's not an easy thing to do.

"Chiaki. You know why Hayato wanted to do this, didn't you?"

"..."



Chiaki did not answer.

“Even though that guy died, he’s been living for your sake. He’s been practicing for your sake. He kept practicing, never giving up even though he knew that he couldn’t revive. He already made up his mind to die, but he’s still worried about you, and that’s why he kept practicing. After that, he gathered us over to you to be your friends. All these, for your sake. What kind of emotional state do you think he was in when he requested us, you know?”

Hayato probably did not openly reveal that he was practicing as he was waiting for Chiaki to walk on her own. He hoped that his practice would come in handy when Chiaki had the courage to walk.

“What do you think Hayato was thinking when he walked here!? What feelings did he have when this video was recorded? He worked so hard for your sake, and you’re going to continue saying such selfish things!? Stand up! Put him at ease! Is it really fine for you to continue on like this!?”

Hayato could not bring himself to be harsh with Chiaki, and so he requested me. Thus, I had to oblige. It might be forceful, but I had to drag Chiaki from the dark world to the sunlight. I too was saved by Hikari Yumesaki through this manner after all.

“But, but...but...”

Chiaki could not stop crying.

“I don’t want to...I don’t want to say goodbye to Hayato...I don’t want him to die...I don’t want to be alone...”

“You’re not alone.”

Saying that, I took out a notebook from my bag.

It's not the exchange journal Hikari Yumesaki and I shared, but the super secret notebook Hayato left behind.

"Ah..."

I opened the notebook, and showed Chiaki. She let out an adorable moan, and stopped crying.

"Don't exert all your weight on the crutches! This is important!"

"The left leg's easier to move than the right. Start walking with your right."

"It's easy to get tired when you exert your knees too much. Make sure your feet land on the ground properly!"

"This..."

"Yeah, this is the walking notebook Hayato left for you, hoping that it'll remain by your side. He wrote down tips on how to walk, all for you."

I kept flipping the pages, and read all the contents to her.

"Chiaki, you're not alone. That guy's always with you. Even after he vanishes, he did reside in your before. He continues to live in you."

"...Hayato..."

Both them, and our backs were faced against each other, and we could not converse. However, they did live in our body. They were the other us.

Even after they vanish—it did not mean that they did not exist.

"Akitsuki...I..."

Tears rolled down Chiaki's tears, and she desperately asked out her voice, saying,

"I-I want to walk..."

“Yep, nice going.”

A weeping Chiaki let out a smile, a firm determination could be vaguely seen on her face. I stood by her left, wanting to give her a large crutch for the time being. Now then, time for her to stand up first.

“...Nnn...haa...”

She let out a painful groan as she stumbled to her feet. She gave a look of disbelief, and could not help but smile. As to be expected of Hayato; it's amazing that he managed to train enough so that her muscles were strong enough to stand up.

“Now then, try walking. First, the right leg...not bad.”

“Yes...”

I lent her my shoulder, held onto her left hand, and watched her slowly — slowly lift her leg.

She trembled, moving her foot forward with much hesitation. However, the legs were moving, and she could not help but let out tears.



See, can't you do it? You can now, right. If one person can't do it, then it's possible with two—with Hayato. We're not alone.

And after some time.

Chiaki's body was filled with life, so hot one could not tell it was Winter.

Step by step, she continued on firmly. The sweat seeping from her palm told me of her body warmth.

Her panting and voice seemed to be showing delight for being alive.

At this point, Chiaki's most beautiful, dazzling. Then—

“Ah...”

We could see the hill by the sea, the sunrise by the ledge.

She stood firmly with both legs, the power of life engulfing her.

“So pretty...”

“Yep, it's pretty.”

Chiaki's sidelong face was dazzling under the morning sun, showing a delight I had never seen before. The expression brimming with hope left me a little unbearable.

...Next, it's time.

“Chiaki.”

I called her, and searched my bag for something. If it all went as Hikari Yumesaki planned, there should be that thing inside the bag.

“—Ah...”

Again, Chiaki looked to be on the verge of tears.

“The recorder...”

“I got instructions, that if you’re willing to walk, I’ll give this to you, Chiaki. This should contain the message Hayato left for you. I didn’t hear anything about this.”

“...Hayato.”

“Don’t blame him. He just kept this hidden all the way so that you can stand up. He’s pampering you all the time, but he really tried his best to be harsh with you at the very end.”

“...Yes.”

It seemed Chiaki’s legs were finally at their limits, and we collapsed to the ground, basking under the sunlight.

With the same movements, Chiaki picked up the earphones, and then —

“Eh?”

“Here.”

She handed the left side over to me.

“Eh, Chiaki — but.”

“It’s fine.”

Seeing her blush, I received the left earphone in a somewhat bashful manner, and inserted it into my right ear — towards Chiaki’s face. Sorry for taking your place, Hayato.

And then, the other Chiaki’s voice came from the earphone. At that moment, the Chiaki beside me started to sob.

The voice melted her frozen heart — and she was finally reunited with her other self.

“Yo! If you’re listening to this now, the operation succeeded, didn’t it? First off, congrats Chiaki! I knew you could do it!”

The usual voice, void of any tension, entered my ear.

I finally heard that voice I wanted to hear for a long time, and Chiaki smiled, shedding hot tears.

“Yes...I did it...”

“Sorry for causing you such painful memories. But I just want to be sure that you’ll be strong at the very end, Chiaki. You’re a strong girl after all, not weak. Because you’ve been working hard. Good work, Chiaki. Congrats!”

“Wrong...it’s because of you being by my side that...that I...”

“Chiaki, it appears that you thought I was suffering inside your body. Actually, that’s not the case. It’s thanks to this that I’m finally able to understand your suffering. I never was able to do anything for you, but I’m finally able to repay your kindness. Thank you, Chiaki. Thank you for saving me.”

“I didn’t save you...I...I...”

“Really, thank you very much, really.”

“...!”

Chiaki finally heard the words she yearned all this time.

For she saved Hayato, and regretted it, and yearned those words.

At this point, she was finally released from the stress. Together with the flowing tears —

“Right, that’ll be all for the thanks! Also, Chiaki...there’s also one important thing I want to say to you.”

There was one thing after that.

Hayato calmly stated the future he had to notify Chiaki of.

“You and I, who has to vanish. I kept avoiding the topic, but now, I want you to understand it.”

Chiaki’s face froze. However, she had to continue listening, to hear Hayato’s decision.”

“Look Chiaki, I never told you the details, but one of us has to disappear. It’s not that time yet, but soon after, that time will come. So right now, I want to decide who disappears.”

Hayato paused for a moment, and continued,

“So, main point, who vanishes...I guess it’ll be me. It’s your body anyway, and I can’t take it away.”

“ ... ”

The cruel decision struck at Chiaki’s ears. She was speechless, faced with the inevitable future, the reality that awaited them.

“I know this will cause painful memories for you, but I can’t sacrifice you. I won’t have happiness without you. Once that day comes, I’ll be the one to vanish.”

Chiaki lowered her head weakly. But,



“But...no, it’s because of this, that I have a request of you, Chiaki.”

He said, with a warm tender voice of one smiling by the side, dotingly, gently,

“I hope that you’ll send me off with a smile, until one day, when it finally comes, until my last moment. This will be my happiness. Living with you — being your other life is my greatest happiness. So, don’t cry, Chiaki.”

“...Hayato...”

Chiaki was unable to cry out loud, and wiped her tears as best as she could.

And then, she tried her best to show a smile, saying,

“Understood...I’ll keep smiling until the very end...I’ll do my best...!”

Her crying face was different from before; seated at this place was a girl who got stronger.

Hayato and Chiaki. You guys are really fortunate.

You’re unable to meet again, unable to converse again, unable to embrace each other again.

But you two—loved each other as such.

“Mission Four. Clear.”

I muttered as I faced the dazzling sunrise.

After that.

“Ah.”

On the way back, while I was carrying Chiaki back home, she suddenly blurted.

“There seems to be a message in folder three.”

“Hm? Really?”

Folder three contained a message Hayato left for me. I would write everything about the operation and the events of the day on the notebook, and have Hikari Yumesaki pass the entry over to Hayato—that should be the process. Thus, Hayato’s recording was completely unexpected.

With the chilling winds of the morning blowing, I shivered as I opened the file. Of course, we’re wearing the earphones like a couple.

“...” “...”

And so, once I was done listening, I—

“I see, huh.”

I didn’t know how to smile, and could only let out some vague words.

“Let me think hard about it, how about it, Chiaki?”

“Hm, then, see you ‘later’ —”

“Right, see you later.”

I sent Chiaki home, made a trip back home, and naturally, I skipped class; I went to bed. After I woke up from the nap, I had some rice, and relaxed.

I took out the notebook, and wrote down the success of the operation. I had a lot of things I wanted to write about, but I had a feeling that I wouldn’t stop if I started to write, so all I reported was about what happened on this day. There would be something major I had to report.

After dinner, I made a lie to my family saying that I would be staying out at a friend's place—in the past, I wouldn't make such a lie. I left home, took the last train, arrived at the familiar station, strolled around for a while, spent time at a café with some wifi, and waited until dawn—

“Kept you waiting.”

“Yo. Sorry to disturb.”

The watch pointed at 4.30am the next time, and I arrived at Chiaki's house.

“Sorry to let you visit at such a strange time.”

“Not like we got a choice. I can't be spending time here.”

It would be great if I could spend the night here, but it's a girl's house. I wanted to think about a lot of things alone. It all started with the folder three Hayato left behind.

“Then, Chiaki—”

“Hm.”

I took a deep breath, and then...I weakly asked,

“Please go out with me.”

“Fufu. You're laughing now.”

I could not help but laugh as I said this,

Right, there was the final mission Hayato left for me in folder three. However, the crux was the content of the mission.

“Be Chiaki's lover, and give her a life of happiness.”

I guess this was what he meant when he said to entrust Chiaki to me...but seriously, he did some strange things at the very end. Well, in any case, the answer's always,

"Sorry, I can't agree."

"Yep, mission failed."

Chiaki's answer was completely within my expectations, and I nonchalantly answered. She too completely understood this, and smirked. Well, that's just how it was to end.

"Looks like Yumesaki never objected to the last mission either."

"Who knows. I never asked him."

We smiled at each other. But,

"..."

For some reason, Chiaki went silent. Hm? What is it?

"Chiaki?"

"..."

For some reason, her cheeks were red, and she was fidgeting. Eh, what? Did she really want to go out with him?

While I let my imagination run wild, Chiaki stammered, apprehensive as she tried to talk. After a while, she finally spoke —

"Erm...Akitsuki."

"Hm?"

"It's impossible...to go out together. I have someone I like, and I'm the same as you in this regard. So I can't agree to this."

Yep, I know.

“But...”

“But?”

“...Is it okay to start off as friends?”

“Hoi-?”

I froze. Someone, please tell me off here. This really...was unexpected.

My face beetroot, I stared at Chiaki, who was looking up at me.

It seemed that even though this series of missions failed, I was finally able to get a reward, to see the true nature of a kuudere. Well, if I'm able to continue teasing her like normal, she's rather cute.

“Is-is it not...okay...?”

“No problems here, Chiaki.”

I couldn't reject her request, having known what it meant to her to make friends. I smiled as I answered, and she gave me a gentle smile.

“Friends...huh.”

We had known each other for about a month.

I stared at Chiaki's face. It was unbelievable to think that she would show such a warm smile at first. A lot of things happened, but after thinking that I was able to see such a smile, all the suffering just vanished. I'm really grateful.

I became friends with Chiaki Tsukimura. It's late, but I finally completed the mission.

I finally obtained that outstanding smile from Chiaki.

"Ah, it's almost time."

Chiaki's words reminded me of Hayato's message. It's about that time already?

There was a last mission in folder three, and another message.

And to respond to Hayato's request, I sat side by side with Chiaki, who's on the wheelchair.

"Be careful. He's a weirdo. He might say something weird out of a sudden."

"Still not as bad as the mess when I first met you. Relax."

"Goodness."

We joked about heartily, like friends.

And so, we quietly awaited that time to arrive. Oh deary me, it's finally coming.

"It's almost time...Akitsuki."

"Hm?"

Chiaki showed a radiant smile, as if stating that she would no longer be fragile again.

"Let's—go out together next time."

"...Right, see you next time."

And so, the hands of the watch pointed at 4.54am.

The time when Chiaki and Hayato would swap places was about to arrive.

The girl before me shall die, and —

“.....Fueh?”

“Yo.”

Looking at this blank expression, I crudely greeted.

Ah, I’ve been waiting for a long time to meet you, you bastard.

“—Aha♪”

The stunned face broke into a teasing one. Looking at this unfamiliar expression, I started to grimace for some reason. You bastard. It’s because of you that I suffered so much.

“Yo! Isn’t this Akicchi? Nice to meet you!”

The voice and face was the same, but the intonation and expression was vastly different.

“If you’re talking to me at such a moment, this means that things are going smoothly, I guess?”

“Sorta. It’s not easy.”

This was Hayato’s other wish. 4.54am, another 5 minutes until I swapped with Hikari Yumesaki. Hayato hoped to use these five minutes to talk with me.

That familiar face of Chiaki showed a teasing smile, and it gave me a spine-tingling weirdness. At the same time, Hayato ignored my response, and quickly rattled off a question, just as he would in the voice recorder.

“I see, I see. Things are going well~ So, how is it? How’s my Princess?”

“Huh? What?”

“Don’t get me anxious here! The confession! Did you kiss!?”

...Ah, that.

“Impossible. She flat out rejected me.”

Stunned, I nonchalantly answered in a ‘what are you saying’ manner. But,

“Eh—? You’re kidding...rejected?”

This unexpected situation left Hayato dumbfounded.

“Why!? I gave you all kinds of missions to get you two intimate to this extent!”

“Huh?”

Why, you ask...what were you saying? Did you really think Chiaki would agree? No, more importantly, I understood after hearing this guy’s tone. Those missions were for such a purpose after all.

There were five missions, and as I expected, this guy’s real objective was to try to get Chiaki and I to be intimate.

Become friends, hug Chiaki, call her name, after all that, the last mission was to confession. All these only meant one thing. Considering that he would no longer be around, Hayato wanted to gift an irreplaceable friend to Chiaki. Thinking about it, Hayato wrote on the message ‘I’m really looking forward to this’, having expected this to happen’.

“Really, did Chiaki harass you? Are you a late bloomer? “Sakamoto’s the type to never lose his virginity until he gets married” Hikaricchi did lament this before. I already set up everything.”



Considering his situation, I knew what feelings he had when he set the missions, even if I was not willing to. It's because of this that I could only show him a pained look. However, thinking about it, it's impossible for us to be dating.

"Tch. Going with my plan, you two would become friends, hug, and be more intimate. Once Chiaki could finally walk, you two would have used the chance to confess and kiss! And then you two could stay outside together with the excuse to meet me, unable to hold your urges until you — and when I swap with Chiaki, you would be saying 'o great Hayato! Please leave Chiaki to me!', Akicchi."

"That's impossible...hey! Stop, stop!"

Right when I was lazily retorting at Hayato. Hayato gave a displeased look, and did an unexpected gesture.

"Really!? They're rather soft, you know? Look!"

"Enough! Stop flipping! That's Chiaki's body!"

I knew the soul's a guy, but that appearance and voice belonged to Chiaki, whom I was familiar, so I could not help but blush. Damn it! Don't laugh!

"Haha, sorry, sorry. But I really thought Chiaki would agree. She seemed fond of you though."

"This is impossible."

Somewhat blushing, I retorted at Hayato's nonsense. It might be weird for me to say this; I did find that Chiaki liked me, but it was completely different from love.

"Chiaki probably has someone else she likes."

“Eh? I can’t tell, you know? She said she doesn’t have one.”

“She has.”

Ah...for goodness sake.

Faced with this dimwit Hayato, I found myself seething. Hikari Yumesaki, this guy, why’re those two like this...well, having dimwits as partners sure is suffering, isn’t it, Chiaki?

“Well, even if you two don’t become lovers, the bare minimum is achieved.”

“Minimum?”

I responded to Hayato’s words.

“You two became real friends, haven’t you?”

“—!”

Shocked, stunned. I could only respond to that insightful expression with silence.

...Well, it seemed this guy wasn’t just a popular one. I underestimated him.

“I got a lot of things I want to talk to you about, but there’s really not much time. Let’s quickly get down to the main topic, Akicchi.”

“...Yeah.”

Hayato’s face looked very serious.

“The last mission’s a failure, but the circumstances are unique.”

After hearing those words, I understood why Hayato hoped to talk to me directly.

We remained silent for a while, and then, with a clear tone, Hayato clearly answered.

He stated the answer I always wanted.

“The journal in the atelier has the method that allows you to revive Hikaricchi’s life with your lifespan as the price. There’s only one chance, and everything comes down to this.

“—!”

I gulped. The truth was right before me.

“The method to achieve this is—”

Hayato opened his mouth.

The words that gambled on our futures—

“I’ll tell you next time, okay♪”

“WHHHHAAAA!?”

...I facefaulted. I could not help myself from collapsing onto the floor.

“I have no choice here. Look, this method’s troublesome. There’s only two minutes left until you switch places with Hikari Yumesaki, and I can’t explain it all. I hid the Atelier journal in a place nobody else knows. How about it; two days later, I’ll send a message to you in a manner only you can see.”

“...Yeah, fine.”

He pulled another fast one on me. Damn it. Stop laughing. You’re making fun of me again.

“...Hey, Hayato.”

“Hm?”

I weakly sat on the floor, my legs folded together as I asked with no enthusiasm.

No matter what, I wanted to hear him say — what he decided upon.

“You...really decided on dying, have you?”

“Haha.”

Hayato laughed in response. Why...was he able to laugh...

“I did mention it in the message I left for Chiaki, didn’t I? I don’t really care if I’m still alive. Because of that, I want to tie up the loose ends of my regrets, and had you help me out, Akicchi.”

“...”

The smile and words were ever so earnest, and I felt an impulse to cry. Because —

“...She’s going to be alone again.”

“No. She’s definitely going to make friends soon, and a boyfriend.”

“But—!”

“She’s different from how she was back then.

Hayato’s intonation was slightly raised.

It was a powerful voice of someone who always trusted in the one he love.

“Chiaki...ended up hating everything, and cornered herself. That’s why I told her that I would not do physiotherapy. However, she ran away from trying to walk. And then, she again gave up because of my death.”

“ ... ”

“But because we managed to meet you, she’s no longer alone.”

And so, he said, with a determined look in his eyes.

“I didn’t die in vain. Chiaki—got stronger.”

His words echoed in my heart.

“ ...!... ”

I did my best not to let myself cry.

“So please, I beg of you, Akicchi. Protect her for my sake, and not save her.”

With a dazzling smile, Hayato looked at me. All I could only do was to lower my head.

Why...why did you have to die...?

I still had things to say. I had a lot of things to talk about, I wanted to continue spending time with you.

However, time was cruel. The hands of the watch showed 4.58am.

“It’s time for us to go our separate way. Anything you want to say at the end, Akicchi?”

“...Something I want to ask of you.”

“Hm? What is it?”

With a hopeful look on his face, Hayato listened to my request—

“Never mention to Hikari Yumesaki the contents of the atelier journal.”

“ ..... ”

And at that moment, his face froze.

“...The reason being?”

“I’ll tell her myself. No matter what Hikari Yumesaki asks you, don’t answer. Please.”

Hayato opened his mouth, wanting to say something. However, he probably realized what I was planning.

“...Alright. I promise.”

“...Thank you.”

There was still thirty seconds left. Hayato smiled, and the expression on his face left me somewhat lonely.

Both of us were living on this way, but we had only five minutes to encounter each other.

But even so,

Even after chatting for just five minutes, I got something clear.

“Hey, Hayato.”

I’m not good at making friends.

“Hm, what is it?”

If I

“Well, what can I say.”

Met this guy when he was alive —

“It’s been eventful, and fun.”

We probably would be good friends. I guess...I was too arrogant thinking this.

"Haha. Don't mind."

Hayato laughed. There wasn't much time left.

"Hayato, one last thing I want to ask."

Fifteen seconds left.

"You're still panicking at the very end, huh? What is it?"

Ten seconds left.

"Why...did you work so hard for Chiaki's sake?"

Eight seconds left.

"...I shall return those words right back at you. I'm the same as you."

"Eh?"

Five seconds left.

"I'll ask then. Why did you do these troublesome missions as much as you could, Akicchi? Even after knowing that only one can continue to live—"

Also,

"Why are you trying to know the method to revive no matter what, with all your might?"

—

What did I want to say? I could not recall.

But at that moment, I certainly understood.

Why did Hayato work so hard for Chiaki.

And why did I work so hard for Hikari Yumesaki till this point.

What was I trying to do?

It was already 4.59am by the time I realized it all. At that moment, I welcomed death again.

—And in my heart, I quietly made up my mind.



# CUT 5 – TOMORROW I WILL DIE, YOU WILL REVIVE

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**“Let’s unravel the mystery around Sakamoto! In this corner, Hikari-chan here will reveal all of Sakamoto’s secrets!”**

In this autumn morning, while I longed for the futon.

Is it snowing? It was so cold, one might be wondering. On this day, I was awoken by the cellphone alarm, and it caused me to remember the part. It has been a while. Is it the second time?

**“Now then, let’s begin! Why’s Sakamoto so tall? Most likely, it’s because of that, the same reason as to why giraffes reach their necks out to eat the tall leaves, he grew tall because he’s trying to looking at the cleavage of women from high above! As to be expected of you, Sakamoto!”**

“What kind of evolution is this?”

I retorted with a grimace, and continued waiting for the rest of the alarm.

**“That’ll be all for today! See you!”**

“ ... ”

Hikari Yumesaki finished her words. But if my guess was correct.

**“...You aren’t listening, right?”**

I guessed. I knew she would leave a message like before. Just as expected.

**“...Yep. Not listening.”**

She cleared her throat with a little cough. Now then, what kind of message will she leave behind?

“...”

“...”

“Sakamoto.”

It's here—

“.....What are you hoping for  
LOLOLOLOLOL? fufufuLOLOLOLOLOLOLOLOLOLOL.”

—Ack.

.....Dammit. She got me.

“Always doing such stupid things.”

After this idiotic procession, I finally got out from my bed. Whatever, this day wasn't for staying in bed. Two days ago, I received a message.

**“I'll tell you where the Atelier diary is hidden! Look at the attached map.  
By Hayato.”**

Hayato and I had a meeting during the five shared minutes we had. Two days later, he sent a message to me, so that Hikari Yumesaki would not realize. I wanted to find the magazine immediately, but it was too far away, so I could only wait until the rest day.

“Alright, let's go after breakfast.”

Saying that, I quickly finished my breakfast, and left home.

I continued on under the clear, freezing blue sky. I followed the map, took the trains and bus, and after five hours of travel, I finally arrived at a dump located in the dumps—right, it's that Atelier. Dried leaves covered the place,

and it was as though time stood still in this world. I proceeded to dig up the thing buried in there.

“This is...the Atelier’s diary.”

The diary hidden in the rusted iron box was so brittle, just flipping the pages might cause them to be ripped off. As rumored, this contained the exchange diary of the two girls. And—

“Two days ago, the soul of the other me had left this world. As per her wishes, we recovered all the secrets we know of, for those who were to share the same fate as us’—is that so?”

The dates were already too dirtied to be seen, but recorded on it was clearly the information I wanted.

And so I continued reading the diary entry. Again and again, wanting not to miss out on any word.

“I see.”

After a long while, I put down the diary, and then—

“...Right, I’ve decided.”

— — — — —

**“So, at the place I died, on the four hundred and forty fourth day—?”**

The opening of the diary entry this day contained such a line.

Two days ago, I took the diary in the Atelier, and recorded everything I found in it on the notebook. I wanted to bring it back, but I had a feeling that I should put it back there, so I hid it in a place only I knew of.

Hm, so, I wrote a long~ long entry in the journal,

1. A body can't have two souls living in it forever, so the soul living inside will become unsuited, and will vanish. The amount of time the soul living in the body shows up will continue to decrease, five minutes at first, and then thirty, and then, the time reduced would be regular. Four hundred and forty four days after the death, the soul living in the body would vanish forever.
2. There was only one way to prevent the soul living in the body from vanishing. That would be to negotiate with what they called the god of death. This would allow the soul living in the body to remain with the host. But in such a situation, the soul of the original host—would be erased at the moment of the negotiation.
3. The way to negotiate: four hundred and forty four days after the death, return to the place of death. That would be the only chance to negotiate with the death god.

Your day of day is the Eighth of April. Four hundred and forty four days later, so the X day will be June 25th next day. On that day, we'll go to negotiate with the death god at the crossing you died at. During that one negotiation we have, we'll have to choose who gets to live.

First off, if we choose that I get to live, just go to the crossing on June 25th, and negotiate with the death god, saying 'Akitsuki Sakamoto will live', and that'll do. After that, your soul will vanish, and I'll get my lifespan back.

Next, if we choose that you get to live, on the same day, we go negotiate, and tell the death god 'Hikari Yumesaki will live'. Once the negotiation succeeds, my soul will vanish, and the body will be yours.

Anyway, next year, on June 25th, either you or I will have to vanish.

...That's all.

I wrote the message with as much detail as possible, so that the idiot would be able to understand.

And her response was basically,

**"Sorry. I'll like to think over this for a while."**

It was a short message. However, it was reasonable. Even I was hesitant if I should write it down when I knew of the facts. In fact, this was not an issue that could be set aside.

Hayato and Chiaki had already come to the conclusion that Hayato would vanish. Hayato never told Chiaki when he would vanish, but the latter said that it did not matter. If she had known of the actual date, she would have lost it. Thus, they decided to continue spending whatever remaining time they had left like usual, until the day it happened. With that, there was nothing I could do, except to watch them spend their remaining time.

"So what will the end result be...?"

I had a look at the diary. It was Friday, already in the middle of December. Soon after, winter break would arrive.

The remaining time continued ticking towards the end.

— — — —

"Nn..."

That day, the moment I woke up, the first thought I had was that it was freezing.

"Have you woken up?"

The blanket was moving. Ah, Yukiko? Why are you in my futon?

“You can sleep for a while longer.”

The voice echoed in my brain, dulled from all that sleep. Okay then, I'll just continue to sleep for a little while more. But why enter my futon? Well, it's warm to be hugged, so I'll let her.

“So warm...nice smell...”

Oi oi, we're siblings, but don't cling onto me that much. Also, get rid of 'that part'. 'It's not nice smell', but 'smells good' here, right?

“Again...just one more time...”

Speaking of which, what's with this strange sound? The pitch should be a little higher than usual—

—Chu.

“Woaaaaahhhhhhhhh!!??”

Eh, what!? What was that about? Something indescribable just touched my lips?

“—Ack, Kinoshita!?”

“Ehehe. Good morning, bro     ”

But that was not all that shocked me.

“—Hey, Kazeshiro!? Why are we sleeping in the same room!?”

“What...you're making a ruckus so early in the morning, Sakamoto.”

And there was something more shocking.

“—Hey mohawk!? Why are you here!?”

“P-please don’t worry!! I did not see bro getting XXX by Kinoshita since morning!!”

W-wait a sec. Wh-what’s going on here? And also, I just realized. Where’s this place? Why did it seem like I was in a big hotel room or something?

But one confusing thing continued after another. This time, it the sound of the door being opened, probably a fusuma–

“Brother, hurry up and wake up–fuuee!? Wh-wh-what are you half naked in the futon with Kaoru!? Has it come!? Has it come now!?”

THis time, it was Yukiko’s turn to show up, her drool dripping onto the floor.

“W-wait! Where am I!? What’s going on here!?”

But the confusion situation compounded. Following Yukiko, the girls continued to deliver knockouts.

“...Sakamoto. I never thought you would have such fetishes...”

“Oh deary me, you look happy there, senpai. This Misaki really is an idiot for having hopes about you.”

“Ka-Kasumi-chan...? Misaki-chan too...!?”

My brain was about to explode, but the one reliable guy present, Kazeshiro seemed to have realized my confusion.

“Ah, Sakamoto, calm down. There’s a reason for this.”

Those words, together with that lethargic face of his, caused me to understand everything. Ah, so that was the case...

“Hikari Yumesaki, huh...”

**“Good morning Sakamoto! We’re off for a three day two night skiing trip! I called everyone in out of a sudden, but everyone quickly gathered! You’re really so popular here, Sakamoto!”**

Such a ridiculous line was written in the journal stashed with my belongings.

“Yesterday morning, Hikari suddenly asked us out for a skiing trip. I didn’t expect her to book a hotel at this time. We set off in the afternoon, arrived at night, skied around for a little while, and stayed for the night—that’s how it went.”

Kazeshiro and I quickly had our breakfast, and we slipped out, making sure we knew what was going on in the conversation. Goodness, that Hikari Yumesaki. I thought she was brooding over the Atelier. Why did she suddenly come out to travel?

“...Nothing happened last night, right?”

“That’s impossible. We had fun skiing, but after that.”

So it did happen huh? I was already feeling very angsty seeing how she went out travelling with this bunch of weirdos. Looking at Kazeshiro’s face however, it appeared it was really bad.

“There was a huge ruckus large night. Hikari proposed that we play the King’s Game.

So, the night after the travel X a bunch of hopeless companions X King’s Game X Hikari Yumesaki. What’s with this fiendish equation?

“It was crazy. Hikari became king a few times, had Sanada and Koudera kiss her on the lips, had Mohawk jump into the snow in his underwear, and



had Kinoshita say the name of the one he likes, which ended up causing your little sister collapse on the floor in a nosebleed...”

Ooohh...well, that’s a tragedy...

“And when Hikari was king, she had a round of strip rock-paper scissors with the girls. She was godlike when she kept winning over and over again, and had them strip. You should apologize to them.”

“What the hell did that idiot do...”

Damn it. I’m jealous. Speaking of which, what’s with her doing that with all the guys around?

“Kazeshiro, you didn’t see Kasumi and Misaki strip, did you?”

“I have no interest in any females other than Hikari.”

Ah, I see...

“And then, it was troublesome when we had to sleep. Kinoshita wanted to attack Hikari at night, so I defended for the entire night. I was trying to hold back from attacking her myself.”

Good job Kazeshiro. I’ll just pretend not to hear the dangerous words you said.

“I kept waiting until you switched with Hikari; it was tiring. After that, I just let Kinoshita do whatever he wanted. That was really amazing. I’m amazed you didn’t get woken up like that. Haha.”

This isn’t funny at all! Secure my innocence until the very end, man!

“Dammit...that’s why I hate to travel...”

Just to note, I guess Hikari Yumesaki was rather happy last night; in the journal she brought along, she drew the scenes of them playing strip rock-paper-scissors and them looking angry as they kissed her. But–

“...”

I remembered something similar to this sudden trip happened back in the summer. I knew what this point.

The journal in the Atelier presented a painful choice before us. This trip was definitely for the same purpose as before, to wipe out the uneasiness, and escape from reality. Otherwise, it could be to finish any unfulfilled wishes–

“Kazeshiro.”

“Hm?”

I said to the guy before me.

“Did Hikari Yumesaki...sat anything after that?”

“...Nope.”

I told Kazeshiro about the Atelier. It’s amazing that he could continue being with us as per usual, but actually, he probably did not feel at ease at all.

“Sakamoto.”

But he definitely understood what we were going through.

He understood my thoughts, he understood Hikari Yumesaki’s thoughts, he understood–

“No matter the outcome, I’ll choose the future you two will decide.”

“...Okat.”

The future Hikari Yumesaki wanted to choose.

“Watch out!”

In the afternoon, we arrived at the ski slope,

“A-are you alright, Kasumi?”

I asked Kasumi from below, as she had collapsed upon me.

The weather at the ski slope was clear. The blue sky and white snow glittered, and looked really dazzling. The songs that would typically play near the elevator in the winter was echoing happily.

“So-sorry about that, Sakamoto. I-I’m terrible at skiing...”

Oh really? I saw you catching up to me at a really fast speed, and stumble around as you knocked me down, or that’s just me. Whenever you tripped over, your amazing breasts would press on my face; I guess that’s definitely a coincidence.

“B-but, you’re skiing fine today, Sakamoto...”

“Ah, yeah.”

“Yesterday, you were going **‘woah, I can’t stop! We’re gonna crash!’**, and you knocked me down so many times...tch.”

!? Did I just hear her click her tongue, or was it just me!?

“Hahaha...”

Anyway, the three of us, meaning Kasumi, Misaki and I were skiing together. Yukiko seemed terrified of the lift, and was playing around in the snow with Kinoshita. “The mountains are calling for me.” Kazeshiro said that, went to the expert areas, and did not return. As for mohawk, probably

assaulted with snowballs by the elementary school girls there, and soon vanished before I knew it. I saw a large snowman with a mohawk in the corner of the ski slope, but it was probably just me, right.

Misaki should be around just a moment back, but she vanished. Kasumi seemed to have knocked someone aside when she skied down, so I guess Misaki's disappearance had something to do with that.

"Hey, hey, Sakamoto...are we going to play...the King's Game again today?"

While I was leisurely skiing and having such wild thoughts, Kasumi suddenly asked.

**"You were so bold...yesterday, you were saying 'if 1 is a girl, then put the ice in the mouth and serve it to the king's mouth! For boys, do something shocking! For mohawk, jump into the snow in your undies!'..."**

"No, that's..."

**"And then, you went 'if 2 is a girl, sleep with the king in a futon! If a guy, mime something! Mohawk, jump into the snow in your undies!'..."**

"Erm, this..."

**"And then, you said, 'if 3 is a girl, step on the king barefoot! If a guy, confess to the one you like! Mohawk, jump into the snow in your undies!'..."** If only I was 3..."

He'll die! Mohawk will die! Also, what did you just say!?

The terror from last night caused me to shiver, and at this point, Kasumi was being so excited that she could not stop. She continued,

**"So-so, I'll secretly tell you what number I drew, Sakamoto. If you become King...I'll do anything you ask me to do..."**

“...Eh.”

That meant...

“I want to repay you...until you let me like you...”

Following that was an unbearable silence. In such an atmosphere, we skied down the snow slope. I was worrying about what to say as I reached the elevator.

“Sakamoto...”

The presence around Kasumi changed.

“I...have something I want to tell you again...”

“Eh...”

Her face was blushing, her lips quivering as she stammered. Her anxious eyes caused my heart to itch

And so, at the highest point of the elevator, it seemed Kasumi made up her mind, her warm, moist eyes were staring at me—

“Sakamoto! What I feel about you is—”

“Now then, senpai! Take the lift with Misaki! Ah, please move aside.”

Thud!

“Ah...!”

Kasumi let out a squeal.

Knocking aside Kasumi before the elevator arrived, and arriving before my eyes was—

“Goodness, upperclassman Sanada, that was dangerous. Please take the next ride.”

It was Misaki. She took the cable car ride that had just arrived—and sat beside me. As for Kasumi, she could only give chase after us alone in the back seat.

“More importantly, aren’t you cold, senpai? Misaki shall lean over to you to provide warmth.”

“Eh, ah, erm...”

I had no right to refuse. Misaki’s body was clinging towards me, and the head covered in the knit cap filled with warmth was leaning on my shoulder. Not good, this is bad. There was a loud coughing sound of an old man from the cable car behind me. This lift’s going to be filled with blood.

“More importantly, senpai. Yesterday was intense. You actually said to play strip rock-paper scissors, and had Misaki strip to almost nothing. Please continue tonight. I am prepared now.”

Ugh...I can’t agree to that...

“So-sorry. I think I went overboard...having you do such a thing even with guys around.”

Anyway, better apologize for the idiocy yesterday. Misaki sighed, and seemed a little peeved as she said,

“...Well, please don’t mind. We stripped, but upperclassman Kazeshiro was just grinning stupidly away at you, senpai, and I’m starting to wondering if he’s gay. Kinoshita’s inching close to you, and I tell that he’s gay. As for that mohawk upperclassman, he passed out there. With so few people watching, I really wasted my efforts there.”

..Sorry.

“So, you’re going to have to repay me today, senpai.”

“Eh? Repay?”

Misaki gave a teasing smile, and said,

“Misaki shall whisper to you the number drawn later, and you can enjoy the Misaki you want for as much as you want, so please look forward to me.”

“Eh, wh-why this...”

“Misaki just had a talk with upperclassman Sanada, that we’ll tell each other our numbers. If senpai knows of Misaki’s number and chooses her number...you know the consequences.”

“Ugh...”

Not good. I could hear more coughing from the lift behind me...no matter the option, I’m going to die.

“Fufufu. Misaki’s looking forward to it.”

With this strange sense of dread, the lift continued up. I guessed it’s my psyche at work, as I felt the wind blowing by my face was icy too.

“I say, Misaki.”

Once I saw the drop off point, I subconsciously asked,

“Do you...like me?”

“Huh—?”

Once I asked, I realized. Damn it. What did I just—

“No, sorry. It’s no—owowowow! My-my finger! Don’t twist it there!”

“Fufufufu. You really like to play with a girl’s heart. How about it? If your reply makes me unhappy, you can jump down from here.”

I’ll die! Sorry! Sorry! Sorry!

“No, erm...”

I remembered Kasumi’s blushing face from before.

I really wanted to know. I wanted to know how much everyone liked me...no, how much they liked her–

“Right, sorry. I didn’t say anything, so please don’t mind–”

“I do.”

“–!”

This unexpected reply caused me to widen my eyes.

The sudden thing wasn’t Misaki’s confession, but her pink lips–that touched mine.

“More than the one I admired.”

“...”

Seeing me lower my head with a flushed face, Misaki giggled.

“You seem to be really troubled, senpai.”

“Eh?”

“It was the same yesterday. You were having fun, but you seemed frustrated about something. Misaki can tell. Even so, you got the answer.”

“...Answer?”



“Didn’t you say so yourself? **‘It’s great to come out on a trip with everyone. Now I can finally make up my mind’**. Misaki’s glad to be able to help you, senpai.”

...

I didn’t know what that idiot decided on the previous day.

But it seemed she got something, she got something from this trip with the ones she liked.

“Senpai.”

Misaki gave a cute smile, and said tenderly,

“Is this Misaki today the Misaki Koudera you want?”

“...Yeah. Thanks.”

Really, thanks. Thanks for liking...us

And after that, I got off the drop off with my body sizzling.

...Naturally, the demon lord that appeared from behind brought me a tragedy.

— — — — —

“...Brother.”

“Oh, Yukiko. Good morning.”

Two days later, the trip ended. Yukiko came to my room with a gloomy face. What’s wrong?

“There’s a fan letter for you...”

“Fan letter? Eh, from who?”

“From brother...”

“...”

Again with the bothersome things.

Recipient's Akitsuki Sakamoto, sender's Akitsuki Sakamoto. Most importantly, there's the line **'I like you ever since I first saw you! Please give me an autograph!'**. Ugh...Yukiko's stare has been pricking at me for quite a while...doesn't this look like some pitiful lonely self-enactment? What was the me yesterday doing!?

“Goodness...hm?”

Then, I spotted a strange line at the bottom of the fan letter.

**“D drive→stored→hidden.”**

“This is...”

Skeptical, I quickly responded.

“D drive → Hidden anime folder → Hidden folder...huh?”

I immediately switched on my computer, and followed the instructions—found it.

When was this created? The hidden folder Hikari Yumesaki created had a little note inside there.

**“Read this as you watch the TV.”**

Upon seeing the title, I knew what she was trying to get at. She's a kind one; she's telling me not to watch with seriousness.

Her kindness left me biting my lips. I double-clicked, and I saw it.

The words—that contained Hikari Yumesaki's decision.

**"To Sakamoto. Sorry for making this late reply. I really thought through this, and I'm feeling really uneasy. But I've made up my mind. I really thought through this, and made up my mind."**

She made up her mind—

Seeing those words, I nearly broke down in tears, but I continued reading,

**"I guess—I'll be the one vanishing."**

**"...Hikari Yumesaki."**

I see. So that's...your choice.

**"Fufu. Well, I do feel a little scared once I decided that I have to die. But I can't sacrifice you after all. The skiing trip back then allowed me to be sure of my thoughts. It's so sudden, but everyone agreed to my summoning, and they all gathered around you. Everyone was smiling so happily on the trip. I really believe that everyone loves you. I can't bring myself to end your life and continue living."**

**"..."**

No. The one everyone really loves isn't me...

**"Sorry. You worked so hard to find a way to let me live, but I choose to die. However, I guess this is my fate. Or rather, it's because I extended this life that should have ended that I have no regrets. Also, it's wonderful to experience your life, Sakamoto. That's why...my life shall come to an end. I'll go negotiate with the death god on June 25th. Thanks for wasting so much time for my sake."**

**"...Damn it."**

I knew. I knew she would make that decision. However...

**"Also, I made another decision."**

Hikari Yumesaki was not done with her message.

**"I'm going to meet mama. I'm going to confess everything to her. I've decided. This time, I won't run away."**

Needless to say, it was a cruel matter. Despite this, Hikari Yumesaki decided to go. There's definitely a determination no outsider could image.

"Hikari Yumesaki..."

How much did she struggle when she wrote this journal entry. How much pain did she go through? She's actually scared, right? But, if she did so, I can't move forward...

....So I too made up my mind.

"Right. I understand, Hikari Yumesaki."

I picked up the pen, and wrote my reply to her on the journal.

**"I understand. If you say so, I won't say anything. That'll be the end of that."**

That will be the end. If not, this rare determination will be for naught.

**"There's only half a year left, but let's enjoy it as much as we can. You and I are going to create the best life for Akitsuki Sakamoto."**

"Alright!"

Feeling pumped up, I picked up the cellphone, and gave Kazeshiro a call.

*"What now, Sakamoto?"*

“Let’s create some memories together.”

I skipped the greetings and looked up at the winter sky as I said this to Kazeshiro.

*“Huh? Memories?”*

“Yup. Memories.”

The sky was far and blue, looking as though it’s about to suck people in. It just felt within reach.

“Let’s go crazy and make memories, proving that she once lived on this world, in my body.”

*“...!”*

“Smile as we watch her leave. Smile as much as we can as we send her off.”

*“...Sakamoto.”*

He’s a sharp one. He’s able to tell what decision Hikari Yumesaki made just by hearing that.

And he’s a kind guy. He never asked anything, just said ‘I understand’.

I hung up, and looked at the calendar. There were four more months, a year since I met Hikari Yumesaki—huh?

“...This is fine, right?”

— — —

Time flew.

Hikari Yumesaki probably discarded her bothers, and like before, went crazy every day, pulling pranks everywhere.

**“Anyway, I’m going to play as much as I want! On Hikari’s calendar, every day is Sunday!”**

“So aren’t you a NEET now?”

Also,

**“Anyway, work hard to discarding your status as a virgin! If you’re always thinking about Hikari and not go out with other girls, Hikari here won’t feel relaxed!”**

“I-I don’t need you to worry about that.”

And also,

**“I want to go into a men’s bath! Just once! I want to enjoy the sight of naked handsome guys after they’re done with their club activities!”**

“Please don’t.”

**“...I’m satisfied      though I was treated as a suspicious person.”**

“Heeeyy!! You went ahead with it!?”

And so on. Hikari Yumesaki got more agitated by the day. Goodness, thanks to her, rumors of me doing dumb things is going to spread everywhere. Well, as long as she’s happy, it’s fine.

**“Yahoo Sakamoto! I asked the class out to go out for karaoke tomorrow. Do your best, okay?”**

“Seriously...again with the unnecessary stuff.”

I chuckled to myself as I read on—hm?

**“Sakamoto.”**

“Hm?”

“Ehehe. It’s great to be in your body     “

“Eh, ah...hm?”

There’s a strange illustration on the journal, and the Hikari Yumesaki in the illustration blew me a kiss. I couldn’t help but frown. I wasn’t too sure, but it seemed Hikari Yumesaki’s really happy.

But the cruel truth loomed to us. Hikari Yumesaki’s revival time was shortened by thirty minutes, and got shorter, to an hour at this point. However, she did not sigh about this. So, I couldn’t say any deflating words either. I had to pretend to remain strong.

And so, time continued to pass.

— — —

“Ah, Sakamoto...it-it’s cold!”

What’s going on...

On this day, so close to the end of the year, I arrived at the station while the sun was setting. This morning, the journal had the words **‘come to the station at 6pm. Prepare a bag and clothes’.**”

“Ah, right. That. You said it’ll be given to me when we meet. Here.”

And at this point it was 6pm, for some reason, there was a girl at the station waiting for me. Kasumi handed me a letter. Eh, what’s this?

“Wh-what’s the matter, Sakamoto? You told me to hand this to you when we meet...”

“Ah, it’s nothing...thanks.”

I received the letter Kasumi received from the yesterday me, and once I opened it, I saw the words **“If Sakamoto’s going to keep worrying about Hikari, Hikari will be worried! Be Kasumi’s escort!”**.

Hikari Yumesaki probably was worried that I would continue to yearn for her, that I might end up like Kazeshiro. She wanted to match me up with Kasumi. I knew her intentions, but this occasion was awkward, because this day was–

“I’m glad, Sakamoto...you chose me...on Christmas Eve, such an important day. So this means, I have a chance?”

Right, it’s Christmas Eve.

Wait, hey...this isn’t good. Kasumi’s all dressed up as a girl. Her clothes and hair looked like they’re going for the kill. Also, Kasumi just said, “I told my family that I’ll be spending the night at a friend’s place. It’s 6 now, you know? There are still many couples on the streets. If I’m just going to have a meal and tell Kasumi “That’ll be it for the night, I wish you a happy winter break”, I’ll be lynched to death, right? What do I do?

But at this point, it was pointless to say anything. First, I followed the instructions in the letter Hikari Yumesaki gave me, and went to the restaurant we booked beforehand for dinner, and exchange gifts (the gift was already packed neatly at the bottom of the bag.

I hoped we would be able to chat on to pass the time, and try to make it last until dawn. Unfortunately, things didn’t go as planned, as Kasumi proposed that we leave, so I had no choice but to follow her out of the restaurant in a lethargic manner. Damn it, I should have noticed when we’re about to pay, but there’s a lot of money in my wallet. I guess it’s meant for me to splurge.



After that, we're just strolling around on the streets on this Christmas Eve. Before I knew it, Kasumi grabbed my arm, and was acting like a lover. She was staring at me from time to time with some intent, saying, "...It's time." I tried to pass it off, saying, "Let's continue walking, okay?", however, her blazing eyes were obviously begging for something. Not good, not good, this isn't good! Somebody save me, I'm serious!

"-ah."

Right when I was being all anxious, we came to a crossroad junction with few passers-by, and Kasumi suddenly exclaimed,

"Do you remember this place?"

Hmmm...this...eh?

I looked around, wondering, "Did something happen here?" I couldn't remember at all, but it's probably something that happened while Hikari Yumesaki's personality was active. In this situation, it'll be very inappropriate to look as though I don't know anything.

"Yeah, I do."

Anyway, let's just try to let this conversation flow.

"You...hugged me tightly over here."

!? What did she say?

"That's my first encounter with you, Sakamoto."

"-Eh?"

"I was harassed by a delinquent here, and you saved me. Back then, you were the one who saved me. You were Sexy Dream.

...Ah, so that's how it is.

"Back then, you were so cool. You had strength, and guts. I was relieved when you hugged me."

She seemed to be dreaming as she said this. She was happy, delighted.

However, I didn't dare to look in her eyes. That's because she didn't know that the one she fell in love with wasn't me. She fell in love with the me who's soon going to vanish from this world. Not me.

"But--"

But?

"The one time when I really came to like you, Sakamoto...was probably afterwards."

"Eh?"

I lifted my head in surprise. Those words took me by surprise.

"When Mohawk came to the classroom...you were the one who saved me, Sakamoto. Back then, you were panicking, and yet you stood before Mohawk to protect me. Actually, you aren't used to such things, right? So that's why Sexy Dream put on the mask?"

"Ah, no, that's...erm."

"But you saved me, Sakamoto. You brought your courage and saved me with all you could. You kept fighting in front of everyone, even without the Sexy Dream mask. Back then, I realized. Ah, Sakamoto's a scaredy cat, a little more timid than the appearances shows, but despite this--you're still a strong, yet kind person. That's why...I like you."

"..."

Kasumi's gentle voice left me speechless.

I was always mistaken. I thought the one she liked wasn't me. But it didn't seem to be the case. She actually likes me—

"It's because I like you like this, Sakamoto, that I really like this timid you today."

"Ah."

Kasumi went straight for the kill. Ugh, was I found out?

"I was so looking forward to today though."

"...Sorry. I guess when it comes to such things, I..."

"Fufu, it's fine. I'm already happy that you asked me out on this special day."

My words were already cold to the max, yet Kasumi responded with a very kind smile. She's really a kind girl. She got rejected over and over again, yet she's always being kind to me. Really—

"But...it's Christmas Eve today. I still want another gift."

However, Kasumi on this day seemed a little different.

"Just today...I want this gift from you, Sakamoto."

"!?"

Kasumi's looking at me with an alluring face, and she closed her eyes, her face slightly lifted up. That's...

"..."

At this point, there's no escaping. I prepared myself mentally, approached Kasumi, and embraced her by the shoulders.

And then, her lips–her lips...

L-lips...

“.....”

Time passed just like that, and after about two minutes (there’s only silence during this time!)

“...” “...”

Kasumi, being impatient that she had to wait, opened her eyes, gave me an unhappy look, and even said,

“Sakamoto, you’re a coward.”

“Ugh!”

Ev-even she said this about me...

But she immediately regained her smile, and with much reluctance, she said,

“I’ll continue, to keep pestering you.”

“Eh?”

She said with a clear voice,

“I’ll keep waiting, waiting, until you embrace me willingly.”

“...”

“Until then, let’s until with today’s events.”

Kasumi gave me a smile, and ran away.

As the snow started to fall on this night, I stood rooted to the spot, blankly.

“...Thanks.”

I muttered to myself in this world glittering with white snow, with nobody around.



-----  
“Gahh...”

A year passed on the calendar, and it was January.

“I’m going to clear all the games I piled up! I’m not going to die until I get all the heroines in this amazing game! Watch me! I’m going to clear this overnight, my brides!”

Hikari Yumesaki’s idiotic rampage caused me to be severely sleep deprived, and at this moment, I’m resting in the infirmary. Ah, the bell rang. Class started? Whatever, just one hour of nap then.

“Did you get worn out because you had a one night stand with your girlfriend? This is why you’re a delinquent!”

“You might not be wrong there.”

“Fufufu. There’s a lot of be implied there. This teacher is feeling lonely.”

The strange looking color of the muffler would remind one of winter, swaying about.

The nursing teacher Higumo looked away from the book in her hands, and asked me,

“I say, Akitsuki, is there anything bothering you at the moment?”

Hm?

“No, nothing. Why?”

“Hm...how do I put it? I guess I have a feeling.”

Higumo noted vaguely. It looked like she had something to say.

With a concerned smile, she said,

“Well, seeing a goody-goody like you, I’m sometimes scared.”

“Hm?”

“You’re always considerate towards others, so much that you might offer your life to help someone else.”

“...”

“Akitsuki.”

Higumo took a breath, and continued. She looked a little anguished.

“Doing things as what others say might not be the right thing to do. If you lie to yourself, you’ll regret it for the rest of your life. Regret is the punishment to not working hard. For the one who bears responsibility—your remaining life is a tad too long.”

“...”

Silence lingered between us. Higumo looked at me worried. In response, I—

“...What are you saying? I don’t have any worries.”

“Is that so?”

“Yeah.”

I glanced aside at a worried looking Higumo, and again looked up at the ceiling.

It’s probably just me, but an unspeakable uneasiness struck me, but it’s common.

I ignored Higumo, and kept quiet.

Higumo’s lonely expression continued to linger in my mind however.



— — — — —  
**“I angered Yukiko...”**

The days and months passed, and it was February, when the winter remained harsh. Now what?

**“After I had a bath, I saw the chocolate Yukiko made, and then I remembered that it’s Valentine’s Day tomorrow. So I couldn’t help but say ‘who’s this for!? Is it for brother!? You’re a brocon, Yukiko!’”, and then she lashed out saying “I’m not going to give it to you, brother!’...”**

What did you do?

**“Uu~I wanted to have the chocolate Yukiko made...I don’t like the thought of dying and becoming Restligest-san...Sakamoto! Try to get the chocolate! Please!”**

She wrote the wrong kanji for self-sealed spirit. No, I guess it’s decent in this situation. No, more important. (TN: Restligest, basically a spirit that gets stuck in a building or land, unable to pass on. In this context, probably a manga shout-out to a 4koma called Re-Kan!)

It looked like Yukiko made chocolate for Valentine’s, but Hikari Yumesaki did some unnecessary stuff and angered her. Ugh, actually, Yukiko’s a proud one. If I apologize to her, I guess she’ll forgive me.

Just to note, I guess there’s something of a Valentine’s Day gift on the table. There’s a box of Koala March snack there, and a card with the words **“with love”**. So she forgot about it. And I thought Valentine’s Day was one girls will never forget.

**“Now then, what do I do?”**

I felt a headache, but it seemed I worried too much. That day, after dinner, I was spacing out, watching the TV. At that moment, Yukiko sat beside me, grumbling away. What she muttered was–

“Yukiko’s not going to give chocolate to a guy who’s not delicate, like brother. I’m going to give it to Kaoru. Yukiko just going for this.”

“Yukiko’s not going to give chocolate to brother, even if it’s a little. Yukiko’s going to eat it tomorrow. Too bad brother’s not going to eat it..”

“The chocolate Yukiko made is delicious. Surely anyone will regret not eating it. This isn’t a bluff.”

“...Yukiko worked so hard to make it.”

“...Yukiko practiced...for this day...Yukiko’s not going to give it to brother...”

“...Sobs.”

...That’s how it turned out. Well, it looked like her pride would continue to be at work since she did say ‘won’t give it to brother’, and I wouldn’t say ‘I want it’. But I knew that the chocolate’s in the fridge, and the amount of effort put into packaging clearly didn’t show that it’s leftovers. Well, she worked so hard into preparing, and yet it’s going to be there until Valentine’s over, Yukiko’s going to break down in tears.

...Goodness, looks like I got no choice.

“Hey, Yukiko.”

“...What?”

“...You still have some of your hand-made chocolate left, so why don’t you give it to me?”

“ — — ! ”

“Please. I didn’t get any chocolate today. If I don’t get any from my family, I’ll suffer.”

It’s a lie. Both Kasumi and Misaki gave me some really delicate chocolates.

“To the one I love.” Even Kinoshita showed his affections towards me.

“I apologize for what happened before. Forgive me, okay? We’re siblings, right?”

Just in case, I gave a little nudge. After that, Yukiko went silent for a few minutes.

At first, she was still looking displeased, but then, her face started to show a smile—

“I-I guess it can’t be helped then! Really, if you wanted to, you could have said so! I-I just so happened to have some left, so I’ll just give them to you! It’s troublesome to deal with it, so perfecting time! It-it’s just chocolate between relatives. Don’t get cocky!”

Yukiko did her best to hide her smile, giving a strange look of a fake angry face as she yelled. Then, she took out the nicely wrapped chocolate from the fridge, and handed it over to me.

“Goodness...Yukiko hates you, brother! Don’t be mistaken!”

Yukiko said while blushing. Yes yes, thank you, Yukiko.

Well, I finally got the chocolate Yukiko made. To be honest, I feel it’s a pity to leave such delicious chocolate to the me tomorrow. But if I didn’t, I’ll get punished again. I left a slip on the chocolate ‘**enjoy it**’, and left the chocolate in the fridge.

Seriously. Remember to thank me, tomorrow's me.

-----

Again, some time passed.

"Welcome."

"Good afternoon."

March was approaching, and the weather finally got warmer. On this day, I came to visit Madam Hinako. There's only one reason. Yesterday's me left a short message—**'mama said 'welcome back'**.

"It's cold, isn't it? Come, hug Adam. This one's one."

"Ah, thank you..."

I hugged the black cat Adam, which seemed to be a little too fat, giving a wry smile. At the very least...it's energetic.

After drinking some of the green tea Madam Hinako brewed, my body warmed immediately, and my heart calmed down as well. Now then, time to ask,

"Madam Hinako, erm...I got something to ask."

"Ufufu. Looking at you now, i guess Hikari never told you the details."

"-!"

"Hikari came here yesterday."

—As expected.

It looked like Hikari Yumesaki finally confessed everything to madam Hinako.

A long time passed since Hikari Yumesaki decided to confess, but it seemed she finally made up her mind. Both mother and daughter were about to reunite, yet she told her mother that she was about to vanish, and it's really tragic. To be honest, I didn't know what expression I should have as I came here.

"Like usual, she came by and wandered around the watermelon field...and I knew it's Hikari's personality that showed up. I watched by the side quietly, hoping that she might show up. Then she really came over to me slowly. I couldn't help but cry when I saw this. So, even though I wanted to wait until the very end, I couldn't help it. I opened the door, and found her standing before me...she kept apologizing over and over again...she didn't have to apologize for anything."

"..."

Madam Hinako made a joke at the end, and started laughing. However, I remained grim faced. I knew I should not be giving such a face, but my body just wouldn't obey.

"After that, we chatted a lot, about how much fun it is being Akitsuki's other half, what happened. She's really fond of you, it seems. Everything she talked about what you, and she had joy on her face as she talked. And then--"

And then,

"...You heard?"

"Yes. I suppose...that moment will be arriving soon."

"...I'm sorry."

“Fufu. There’s no need to apologize. It’s thanks to you that I’m able to see Hikari. And also, I saw quite a bit of her smile too.”

Madam Hinako chuckled.

She did not cry. Surely she did, and surely she was enduring the tumultuous emotions. Actually, she probably didn’t want to see my face. Thinking about this, I felt guilty.

However, Madam Hinako did her best to show a smile, and talked about what her dearest daughter talked about, what kind of life the daughter living in my body had, a lot, a lot of things. Till the end, she kept a smile.

“Akitsuki.”

I was about to head home. She sent me off at the corridor, and tenderly said to me,

“Thank you. It’s great that Hikari’s able to live in your body.”

I could not answer.

Just enduring the tears that were about to fall took all my might.

---



And so—time passed by in an increasingly rapid manner.

Hikari Yumesaki happily passed her remaining time.

She created doujins with Yukiko, and went about having fun.

She went dating with Misaki, was caught by Kasumi, and interrogated.

Also, Kazeshiro, Kinoshita, and even Mohawk joined in to form the Sexy Dream squadron.

Every day, she enjoyed herself, and was glowing until the very end of her life. All for the sake of not leaving behind any regrets in her remaining time, not leave any regrets in her life. Thinking about this, I felt a little dejected.

“This is the place Hikari loves. We often have our hero meetings here.”

Kazeshiro lifted his head at the sky, muttering,

We’re at the balcony of Takiou High School. At first, we were having tea at the South Star, and then I asked Kazeshiro “Is there any place to relax around here?”, so he brought me here. I was an outsider, but Kazeshiro said “there’s a way to get in”, so we sprinted all the way here. This guy’s being reckless recently.

“That person always like high places.”

I stood at a corner of the roof, imagining Hikari Yumesaki at this location with a great view, spreading her arms wide, the black hair fluttering with the wind, giving a shining smile—

“It’s going to be a year soon”

I let my thoughts run wild, and suddenly muttered this for some reason.



The spring breeze was gentle and wind, seemingly wearing at the memories little by little.

It had been a year...since the moment when I first laid on the watermelon field, wondering if I lost my memories.

“Sakamoto.”

“Hm? What is it?”

Kazeshiro turned his back on me, asking,

“You’re not thinking of dying for Hikari’s sake, are you?”

“...”

...What are you saying now?”

“She made up her mind. I too made up my mind. If you’re worried, you can go wait at the crossing on June 25th. Either way, the personality showing up that day isn’t going to be me.”

“...Yeah. Sorry, forget about what I’ve just said.”

After that, Kazeshiro too went silent.

Several hours passed, and we never chatted, instead immersed in the wordless time.

The sunset seemingly tried to summon the anxiety in our hearts, and was etched deep in my eyes.

— — — — —

Late March, during the Spring vacation as the plums bloomed, Hikari Yumesaki wrote on the journal.

**“1. Buy a 500 yen ticket at the station 2. Get down to the last station of the Express Train 3. Ride the bus there. 4. See the map Hikari personally drew.”**

I followed the instructions, and finally came to that place.

“Isn’t this the camping site?”

My childhood memories—the camping site where Hikari Yumesaki and I somehow met, and had memories off. Haha, how nostalgic. I remember us playing by that river, but Hikari Yumesaki wouldn’t come over, so—

“So, what’s note?”

There’s a letter in the journal, the envelop with the words **“Open only when you arrive!”** I open it, and found another map. However, this wasn’t an ordinary map.

There were        marks and ★ marks, and also a        . I see, a treasure map.

First, I tried digging at the place with the        mark, and dug up a lot of upskirt photos of Kasumi, Yukiko and others. How did you managed to take so many? How indecent, I’m confiscating.

Then, at the        mark, I dug up something packed inside a plastic bag. I opened it, and found a photo of Mohawk and I wearing bloomers and making ridiculous bodybuilder poses. Naturally, I threw them into the river. I could see Kasumi blushing as she waved her arms about in a corner of the photo; better forget about this.

And then,

“Ah.”

I found photos at the place with the ★ mark, but it wasn't a photo taken by Hikari Yumesaki.

"So there's such a photo."

It's a photo of kids, filled with memories. Right, it's the photo of our encounter. Hikari Yumesaki probably found it from Madam Hinako.

The girl in the center wearing a headband was Miyamoto. Yeah, I remembered her face. I was beside her, and back then, my face wasn't that terrifying. However, I could see clear signs of what I would become growing up. Once I did, I became scary.

Then, my eyes landed upon a shy looking girl. Back then, she was an obedient, timid crybaby.

Right—she's my Polaris Princess, Hikari Yumesaki. She in the photo was tugging firmly at my clothes, looking to be on the verge of tears.

"This is where we met, huh?"

The nostalgic photo caused me to reminiscence the past. No, I can't cry. That Hikari Yumesaki's trying to make me cry through some strange way.

"Hm, what's this?"

I took out the other thing inside the plastic bag—a letter.

**"Once you read it, crush it and throw it away."**

Such a line was written on the envelop. What did she mean? I opened it.

**"Throw it away. If you hide it, I'll get angry."**

She warned me. Got it.

**"Throw it away."**

**"Really, throw it away."**

**"I wrote this letter after summoning my guts here. Promise me."**

**"...I say again, throw it away."**

**"Argh, this is annoying!"**

I retorted at the envelop filled with warnings, and opened the memo.  
Goodness, what was written—

**"Sakamoto, I like you. The boy-girl kind."**

**"..."**

At that moment, I made up my mind to keep this letter forever.

To hide the embarrassment on my face, I lifted my head towards the sky. A plane's trail glided through the wide sky. It went further up, glittering. It kept moving forward.

**"...Thanks."**

The time of Hikari Yumesaki's personality decreased by three hours.

**"Yukiko."**

That night, I came over to my little sister's room, and called out for her. Yukiko was facing the computer, and looked over at me with annoyance.

**"What is it?"**

**"Nothing. Just a little bored. Let's play some games."**

**"Eh? Wi-with Yukiko?"**

“Yeah. Come, sit here.”

I took out the cellphone, sat on Yukiko’s bed, patted my thighs, and had her come over. It was a little embarrassing, but I wanted to try this once.

“Go-goodness...if you want to stick together with Yukiko, Yukiko shall obliged brother. Yukiko’s a kind one.”

“Yeah. Glad to have a kind little sister.”

Yukiko’s clearly feeling happy, yet she’s acting like a tsundere for some reason, and her face looked strange. I couldn’t help but grimace at her.

I had Yukiko sit between my thighs, and started having fun as we played games.

“...This should be the only thing left.”

“Hm? What are you saying?”

“No, it’s nothing.”

After that, it was time to sleep. I had a look at the calendar, waiting for the death anniversary of Hikari Yumesaki that was about to come—April 8th. On this day, it will be her personality, not mine, that’ll show up.

Soon, very soon, everything will end. After that—

“I’m...doing this.”

— — — — — — — — — —

The time was 4am. In the dark room, I heard the rain as I awaited this moment.

April 8th, Hikari Yumesaki’s death anniversary. The weather was rainy.

This would be the day Hikari Yumesaki's personality would show up. At 4.59am, she would take over from me. Thus, there were still fifty nine minutes. This was the remaining time I had.

"Time to head out."

I put on the watch Hikari Yumesaki gave me, and checked the time.

I passed through the darkness, walked out of the room, and slipped through the corridor quietly.

The rain appeared in my sights, and it was really heavy. It appeared it would not stop for the time being.

I walked down the asphalt road that was flooded. The vinyl umbrella blocked the sky, and made it look a little twisted, probably because of the raindrops.

"I remember it was the rainy day."

I heard the raindrops, and thought of the journal entry I wrote."

**"There's something I have to apologize to you about, Hikari Yumesaki, I lied."**

I walked down to the crossing where Hikari Yumesaki died.

**"I told you the Atelier Journal contained the truth to the revival."**

There's still an hour left. What would her feelings be when she wakes up?

"I said, that on the four hundred and forty fourth day after the death, the 25th of June this year would be the only day to negotiate with the death god."

She would probably be fuming. Definitely lamenting.

**"444. This might look like something, but I just made it up."**

But it did not matter. No matter how much she hated me.

**"The one day to negotiate with the death god is not the 25th of April, but—"**

As long as that person, Hikari Yumesaki,

**"Exactly a year after death—today, April 8th."**

Could continue to live, it did not matter.

**"By the time you're reading this entry, on the 8th of April, I might have completed the deal."**

Sorry, Hikari Yumesaki.

**"You probably won't forgive me. There's no way you will. But."**

I'm really sorry, Hikari Yumesaki.

**"I guess it's impossible for me after all. There's no way I can live in a world without you."**

I can't accept a daily life without you.

**"So, Hikari Yumesaki, continue living for my sake."**

The water slipped down my face. Raindrops or tears, I could no longer tell.

Sorry everyone, Yukiko, mom, dad, I'm really sorry.

**"Forgive...me."**

Choking on my tears, I went forth.

There's still another two hundred meters to the crossing. The location was at the other side of the corner. It was enough, I don't have to think much.

I've decided not to turn back, just head forward. If I missed this day, I'll be unable to save Hikari Yumesaki. So, on this day—I have to do this.

“Eh—”

But I had to stop.

There was someone holding a black umbrella standing before me in the dark screen of rain, and I gasp.

“Yo.”

That guy waved at me, smiling heartily. Why...

“Kaze...shiro.....?”

“So you came by? Sakamoto?”

Kazeshiro was standing before me.

“What are you doing, Sakamoto? It's still too early to go to school.”

“Why are you here...?”

I paled, and asked. Kazeshiro smiled, and said with rigor,

“Time to go back, Sakamoto. I'm not letting you meet the death god.”

“How did you know...”

I made a lie on the journal to hide the truth from Hikari Yumesaki.

Naturally, I did not tell Kazeshiro, and the hidden location of the Atelier journal was known only to me. I told Hayato to keep it a secret. However,

“—!”

As I thought about it, I realized. No way.

“Have you noticed it now, Sakamoto?”



Kazeshiro looked up at the rainy sky, and let out a deep sigh, saying,

“Hayato Hyuuga. That guy told Hikari Yumesaki everything. Everything about the Atelier journal.”

“Wha...”

“That Hayato Hyuuga probably expected it, that you may have lied. He probably realized that this was unfair to Hikari, so he told her the truth. Hikari then realized why you lied that it was four hundred and forty four days later, and thought of what you wanted to do.”

“Damn it...”

I see, so that’s how it is. Why didn’t I suspect anything?

*–I’m the same as you.*

I asked Hayato why he was working so hard for Chiaki, and this was his answer. Hayato saw that I was the same as him, wanting to die for his partner. The reason why Hayato did not want me to do this because he chose me to be the friend supporting Chiaki. With this mindset, even an idiot would understand. Hayato would not just watch me die. No matter how I might tell him to keep this secret, it was pointless. At this point, the situation developed as Kazeshiro had said. Hayato and Hikari Yumesaki were on the same side, and in a certain sense, he understood her feelings better than anyone else. That was why he would not pretend to ignore this unfair lie to Hikari Yumesaki.

**“Hikari told me. “It looks like Sakamoto wants to die in my stead. He’ll definitely go negotiate with the death god before.4.59am on the 8th of April. If he finds out that I know this, he’ll definitely try to slip through.**

**So make sure you pretend not to notice, and on that day, no matter what, you have to stop him”...**”

“...So you show up before me now, Kazeshiro?”

“Yeah. I’ve been in ambush since last evening. And you showed up.”

...Damn it.

I glared at Kazeshiro with much regret. In contrast, he was sneering away, taunting me.

“Sakamoto!”

He called out, loud enough for a certain someone who’s no longer on this world to hear.

“If you want to save Hikari, you’re going to have to beat me! You win if you beat me! You can die all you want then! But if you can’t–”

The smile vanished from Kazeshiro’s face. The hollow eyes were staring right at me, and I could not look straight into them.

“That’s enough already. Continue living happily in the world without Hikari.”

“...Haha.”

For some reason, I started laughing out loud. Ah damn it. I thought it would be a perfect strategy. I never thought I would be seen through so easily. But it did not matter.

“Too bad, Kazeshiro.”

“...What?”

My plan failed. Good job, you guys. But you guys made a mistake. No, you guys are overconfident.

“Kazeshiro...do you think you can beat me?”

“...”

I stared at the enemy, and declared this. Hikari Yumesaki, I don't know how you managed to bribe Kazeshiro.

“Kazeshiro. You're not going to beat me.”

I have the advantage in height, physique and arm strength. There's no way your thin arms are going to beat me, Kazeshiro.

Firmly believing this, I smiled. I'm confident. However,

“Who knows, Sakamoto? Hikari said that I'll win.”

“...What?”

Kazeshiro didn't back down, and smiled, laughing,

“Sakamoto. This is...the opposite of back then.”

“Eh—”

For a moment, I did not realize what he was getting at. However, I immediately understood.

“Back then, I wanted vengeance through my death, and Hikari asked you to stop me. Right now, it's me who was asked by Hikari, and you're the one who want to die. Look how far you've fallen, Akitsuki Sakamoto.”

“—!”

“I remember it was raining back then. Sakamoto, you were like me back then. That's why—”

Saying that, Kazeshiro glared at me,

“I won’t lose. Back then, you were the same.”

The turbulent rain overpowered Kazeshiro’s voice. The memories of that day appeared in my mind, and everything before my eyes went blank.

Regret and rage were mixed into my blood, running throughout my entire body. The rain poured harder than before—

“Ahhh!!!!!!”

The next moment, I ran, threw aside my umbrella, and swung my fist at Kazeshiro. However,

“Gah!?”

He easily evaded my fist, and landed a clean shot into my abdomen.

“Guh....aaahhh!!”

Despite this, I stood up, trying my best to fight back. I continued charging into the rain. However,

“Ah!”

I couldn’t reach. Not only that, I was easily beaten down,

Several times, I stood up, and several times, I was beaten down. Kazeshiro again dodged my attacks, beating me down, and blood dripped onto the ground along with the rain, probably as I was hurt somewhere. I felt displeased.

“Damn it...damn it...”

I can't lose. If I lose, and miss out on the day, I won't be able to save Hikari Yumesaki. There's no second chance; once I miss this, she'll never be able to be revived again. However,

"Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!"

With all of my remaining strength, I stood up, and I saw Kazeshiro's anguished eyes.

Stop. What are you looking at? What are you pitying?

"Stop pitying...me-!!"

That was the last of my strength. I could not fall correctly.

Kazeshiro swung his fists down on me, depleting my strength. I collapsed onto the concrete, the rain staining my skin.

"Why...why, can't I win..."

The tears could not stop.

"Let go...Kazeshiro..."

"..."

"Please...I beg of you...!"

Kazeshiro remained silent.

"Let go, Kazeshiro! You miss out on this day, and you won't be able to save Hikari Yumesaki! I can't live without her! You're the same too, right!? You're fine with Hikari Yumesaki dying just like that!?"

I yelled at Kazeshiro, who stood in the rain. I believed that he would surely understand me.

“Think of what Madam Hinako will think! She just reunited with her daughter...but, they’re going to be separated again! Are you willing to allow such a cruel thing to happen!? Say something!? Are you willing to let her die!?”

I will not allow this to happen.

“Kazeshiro! You don’t want Hikari Yumesaki to die, right!? Or is it fine that she’s dead!? What about you, Kazeshiro!?”

“...Sakamoto.”

“Answer me! Even if Hikari Yumesaki vanishes, you’ll really...”

I could no longer continue my words. That was because, Kazeshiro’s hand was grabbing me by the collar.

But that was not the only reason why I could not say anything;

“Do...you know what I’m thinking about as I stand here...Sakamoto?”

“\_”

At this point, I noticed. Kazeshiro’s—crying too.

“Do you know the feelings Hikari had as she asked me? The feelings I have as I stand here? Please, don’t say anything...stop putting me in misery!”

The tears continued to fall. Anguished tears seeped into the rain.

“Also, Madam Hinako knows about this.”

“Eh—”

Kazeshiro’s words left me speechless again.

“When Hikari went to visit Madam Hinako, she confessed everything; about how she was going to vanish, that you want to die, everything that will happen today, everything, everything, everything–”

Impossible...but, these actions–

“Are for your sake...”

“Eh?”

“Even till the end, Hikari was still scared of meeting Madam Hinako. However, she’s more worried about you feeling guilty for letting her vanish–that you won’t dare to look for Madam Hinako again because of her disappearance–to prevent this from happening, Hikari summoned her courage to meet her. And, she said everything. She prepared herself to see her mother cry, all for the sake of having you meet her mother again.”

“...”

“You’re a blessed man. Hikari thought so much for your sake. I said it a long time ago, but your life is the best of all. That’s why....I can’t let you end your life here.”

“Impossible...”

Despair turned into rain, freezing my body.

“Was I the only one in the dark?”

“...”

“Was I the only one in the dark...”

Kazeshiro did not say anything.

"I came to save Hikari Yumesaki...but I was the only one who didn't know anything...in the end, I was saved, by Hikari Yumesaki...again...again..."

I could not stop crying. I wanted to save Hikari Yumesaki. However, I was saved by her again.

"Sakamoto."

Kazeshiro picked up the umbrella, and walked towards me, taking out something from his bag.

"Ah..."

It's a letter with a pretty color. That's,

"From Hikari Yumesaki, a letter for you."

"Letter..."

I received the letter Kazeshiro handed to me, and wanted to open it, but my hands could not exert strength. However, I finickedly moved my fingers, and opened the seal. Appearing before me was,

**"To Sakamoto,"**

The familiar cute words appeared on the letter.

**"If you see this letter, this means you intend to die for my sake. I'm really sorry for pretending not to notice all this while. Don't blame Kazeshiro. It's all my decision."**

"Hikari Yumesaki..."

**"Sakamoto, I'm really happy by your feelings. Every time, you'll come to save me. Again and again, I was saved by you. That goes too for Kazeshiro, and for mama. You kept saving me. Without you around, I**



**probably won't be able to do anything. So I've already made up my mind. One day—until the day I'm able to save Sakamoto, I'll definitely choose to save Sakamoto. I want to be the hero protecting Sakamoto. This is my repayment for not being able to do anything. I want to protect the irreplaceable, most important...you that I love."**

**"No..."**

No, Hikari Yumesaki. It's just you who thinks that you didn't do anything. You're the one who changed my lonely life. Do you know how much I've benefited from you.

**"And I said before, that I can't live in a world without you. That's because,"**

The exceptionally pretty handwriting continued—

**"I can't live on alone in this world anymore. The ones connecting my life to this world are the cold, yet gentle eyes line."**

It was the line that girl once wrote in her student handbook, the line that caused Kazeshiro and I to misunderstand,

**"Ehehe! I'm finally able to use this line! I always wanted to use it once before I die. It's amazing, isn't it, Sakamoto? Really appropriate to use it here. As to be expected of this Hikari! Praise me! Praise me! Pat my head! And then..."**

And then,

**"Keep smiling. Don't cry, Sakamoto. This is my final wish."**

**"...!"**

The rain got warmer, and my cheeks got hotter. The tears fell, my fists are clenched. Everything–

“Ahhh!!!”

“–Sakamoto!”

I ran. Kazeshiro hurried after me. Just a little more, and I'll reach the crossing where she died. As long as I get there, reach there. But,

“Ah!”

My legs do not obey me, and tripped me over. The rain pelts on my body mercilessly,

“Ahh...”

As I fell, something fell from my pocket.

The thing that rolled before me gradually got damp.

“Hikari Yumesaki's...talisman...”

The strings scattered, and the content spilled out. Inside it was a piece of paper that was folded really small. The rain soaked paper contained the words Hikari Yumesaki wrote with her cute handwriting,

**“Sakamoto. We'll be together forever!”**

“Together...be together...”

I reached my hand out, yet it was not enough. Just a little more, but yet unable to reach. I could no longer, reach for it, ever.

“Why couldn't I do it...”

The hands of the watch on my wrist indicated 4.58am. Ten seconds, twenty, thirty. And then,

“Come back.”

A voice rang through the rain.

It was a kind, bubbly voice. The one who picked up the talisman for me was.

“Akitsuki.”

“Madam Hinako...”

Thank you.

I seemed to hear her mutter.

After that, the time reached 4.59am.

I died, and she revived.

## CUT 6 – TOMORROW I WILL LIVE, TO LOOK FOR YOU AGAIN

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It's a calm morning, absolutely silent. Not even the sound of birds could be heard. It's a pure white morning.

The date indicated on the cellphone was April 9th.

There's no sign of any mess in the room. There was nothing written in the journal that laid

Such a morning left me with a fresh feeling, as though I woke up from a strange-beautiful dream that I could not recall.

"...**Thanks**", huh?"

I sent a message on the cellphone. The receiver's Kazeshiro.

"Sending."

This short message's sent over immediately.

"Hey Akitsuki."

"Hm?"

"Do you have any troubles, if I may ask?"

"Hm."

"If possible, please tell me."

"Right now, I'm bothered that whenever I sleep in the infirmary, this teacher will just get onto the bed to sleep with me."

It's the spring, the sakuras blooming, and the weather's clear.

I skipped class, and came to take a nap in the infirmary. For some reason though, I'm woken up by the idiot nursing teacher who's smiling at me from up close. Ehh, what's with you?"

"Kukuku. Sorry about that. Your sleeping face is cute, Akitsuki, so I can't looking at you."

"Enough with that."

Higumo gives me a smile, and I immediately blush, inadvertently looking away. She probably finds it interesting, as she covers her mouth and starts to giggle. After some silence, she says,

"But time really passed by. It's been a year, hasn't it?"

"Hm? What?"

"It's been a year since the time when you first came to see me, no?"

"Ah."

I see. If it wasn't for what happened a year ago, I probably wouldn't be here. Besides, I won't be looking for her.

"Anyway, get out. Not a good thing to be seen now."

"I refuse. It's rare to get such opportunities."

Higumo says, hugging me with a cheery face. Ah, that's enough already, damn it. I don't like it, but it seem like a waste to break free. Damn it.

"Hey, Akitsuki, I got a request."

"What?"

*Probably some ridiculous request anyway*, so I thought, and I retorted back.

And as expected, her reply's stupid.

“Want to do it with sensei?”

“...Again with that?”

Higumo pointed her index finger at her opened collar, and blew at my ears, giving off a mature alluring charm. What the heck, we young folks are growing every day, and this woman hasn't changed at all.

“Do you want to?”

“Of course. But I won't.”

“Fufu. How dishonest of you. Hm? That was for real?”

I can't be bothered with you. Seriously, get out already.

“A year huh?”

However, Higumo ignored my wishes. She started to mutter with a nostalgic look.

“It's been a long while. No, kind of short, isn't it?”

“What's with you? What are you mumbling about?”

“Kuku. Actually, sensei here is going to resign.”

The sudden news left me speechless. Eh, wh-why at this moment—

“My job is done. However, someone else will continue the mission. It's a pity that the promise ends without being fulfilled. This is a challenge for the children. I do suppose—there is such kindness on this world, isn't there/”

“Huh? What?”

Eh, what are you saying? No, more importantly, you say you're going to resign—

“Akitsuki.”

Higumo ignores my confused stated, and stands up,

The hair flows, and the pretty muffler fluttered.

With a childish–yet piercing voice, she whispered,

“You need to continue being kind.”

“Huh?”

My cheek’s touched by the soft, boneless-like hand.

Seeing me space out, Higumo again smiles, and undoes the muffler, walking out of the infirmary.

“...This is ridiculous.”

I, remaining in the infirmary, can only space out and watch her leave. I just feel like my thoughts got rattled.

“...Time to return to class, i guess.”

It’s a bit weird to be remaining standing stupidly in the empty infirmary, so I decide to return to class.

I pull the door aside, and turn to look back at the infirmary.

And again–I feel a little lonely not hearing these words,

“...I’m not cutting my hair.”

I silently close the door, and say these words.

These are the last words I exchanged with Higumo.

Like a proper high school student, preparing for exams, I pass this day as usual.

“I’m back.”

After school, I return home, and walk into my room.

I’m back to my usual quiet daily life like before. However, it just feels that there’s a large hole opened in the room, or maybe it’s just me.

“...”

I look around. There are pentabs, anime blue-rays, figurines, ero-games, bolsters, manga, doujins, BL novels, and all kinds of things. Then, there’s also a notebook.

Naturally, there’s no reply to the journal entry I wrote two days ago. I knew that would happen. I saw everything Hikari Yumesaki wanted to say on the letter in the rain. When yesterday ended, Hikari Yumesaki ended. The cute words, the pranks that drove me crazy, the outlandish reports, the ridiculous rules, the cute illustrations, none of them will appear in this notebook again.

“Ehh, not like I can do anything about it.”

I kept repeating such thoughts in my mind, but in the end, I closed the journal to avoid having any lingering thoughts. It’s not good to keep thinking about it.

“Now then, time to start. I’m prepping for college anyway.”

I try to coax myself so as to change my mood. Thanks to this year, my grades really slipped. To be honest, it feels like I was playing around for half the year.



Anyway, I finally manage to return to my usual daily life—and so a week pass.

Why is this happening? I assume that I'll be a mental wreck due to anguish, but I never expect myself to accept this current situation so easily. Of course, there are times where I feel lonely. When I wake up in the morning, I'll find my room all neat and tidy, and with people around me saying stuff i know, it just feels weird to me. Not having to write a journal before I sleep makes me feel that I'm missing something. Sometimes, I just feel powerless for moments, as though I've woken up from a wonderful dream. However, I haven't sighed about it.

Surely it's because of the last letter she left behind for me.

Don't cry, smile.

I knew it was because of these words supporting my inner heart that I was able to continue living on enthusiastically. Even until the very end, she lived on for my sake.

—However,

I can no longer open the exchange journal.

Back in the day, whenever I woke up, I would open the journal Hikari Yumesaki and I shared. Right now, even if I open it, there won't be any new content, I guess, only the memories she once left behind. But for some reason, I can't open it.

Because I know.

That if I'm to open it—and see the words she wrote, surely,

Something might collapse,

.....

...

“Nn...”

Sunday arrives. The sun rises, and I wake up. I take a look at the date on the cellphone, see that it's Sunday, and scan the room in a blur. What's going on? I just feel so refreshed on a Sunday after spending Saturday. So a week is this long?

“... Time to do some cleaning up.”

This is the room where Hikari Yumesaki and I spent time together.

I want to make memories, and leave the stuff that person bought or got from somewhere untouched, but it feels like I'm basically admitting that I have longing feelings for them. Memories are memories, to be left buried in the heart. At the very least, I should at least revert my room to how it's like before.

“Alright, time to get pumped up!”

I shout, quickly finish my breakfast, wash my face, and change into comfy clothes. This motivation is important. It's pointless to remain dejected all the time; I still need to live on.

With such determination, I start to clean up. I'm mentally prepared, but there's still a lot of work.

Either way, there's way too much stuff. If I'm to do a clean up as usual, I guess I'll be done in a short while, but with so much, I'll be done at sunset if I do this seriously.

So, to heck with being serious. Rather than a cleanup, I might as well say that it's a full shakeup—with such thoughts, I start to clean up my room little by little. It's been a while since I cleaned up my room like this—

“Hm?”

Suddenly, something flutters out. While I'm thinking of a way to stuff the manga into Hikari Yumesaki's personal shelf, something flutters out from between the books.

“A note?”

I have a look at the thing that fell onto the floor. So it's a folded piece of paper, and there seems to be something written on it. I pick it up; what's written in there—

**“Hikari shows up after being forgotten! It's amazing that you managed to find this hidden Hikari! As to be expected of you, partner!”**

Ah—

“This...”

The next moment, I can't be bothered.

I start looking around the room, and I find papers stuck under the carpet, in the creases of the chair, at the back of the clock.

When did she stick them? When did she put so many—

Countless bits of papers are stuck at every corner of the room. The other half that I so love—

**“Ohhh! You're able to find Hikari even after she's hiding here! As to be expected of you, Sakamoto!”**

**“Ehehe! This is an afterimage of Hikari!”**

**“Even if you find me, there’ll be a second, third Hikari appearing...”**

**“Even though I’m found, there’s still more coming after me!”**

**“You idiot! I’m a shadow clone!”**

**“...!”**

The paper slips aren’t only in the room. They’re also in the corners of the washroom, the corners of the hung scrolls, beneath the table in the living room.

The house I lived in with her, one by one–

**“Ah...”**

My eyes catch sight of one of the bits, and with pretty handwriting, the words written are,

**“The name written on this note shall die after obeying Hikari’s order.”**

**“...”**

**“Akitsuki Sakakimoto, you died once in Hikari’s place. After that, Hikari was completely revived. So, forget Hikari and live on happily. Please continue to live on happily.”**

**“–!”**

No, I can’t cry. Got to hold it in.

Didn’t I make a promise? I can’t cry. She and I–

**“Brother...?”**

**“Woah!?”**

Suddenly, I hear a shout, and recoil in shock. I turn around, and find Yukiko behind me.

Th-that shocked me. What's going on?

"What are you doing? You've been looking around everywhere."

"Eh, ah, yeah..."

Got to find a way to bluff her. Hold it, try to bluff her,

"W-well. I'm packing things up,. I'll be done immediately."

I try my best to tweak my tone. That's close, but I should be able to pull a fast one.

-However,

"..."

"Yukiko?"

My answer doesn't seem wrong, but why does Yukiko look surprised?

And her face starts to look sad.

"Brother."

"Hm?"

"Erm, it's late to ask this now, but I'm curious to what you said before...what you're doing now has nothing to do with what you said, right...?"

"Hm? Ah, what?"

"I really thought hard about it, but I don't get what you mean at all. I'm really curious."

Looks like Hikari Yumesaki said some strange stuff to Yukiko. What happened.

“Erm, what did I say?”

“You said, on that day, ‘tomorrow, I will die, and your brother will revive, so relax’. I can’t get what you mean at all.”

“\_”

Those words...

“E-even if it’s a joke, don’t die or anything. I heard that those who want to die will look clean up the stuff around them. What you’re doing now has nothing to do with that, right brother?”

“-!...”

**-I finally obtained a delinquent’s body I always wanted! I now fear nothing!**

**-Yukiko got a boyfriend!**

**-Okay, based on Hikari-styled’s majority vote, it’s decided that I’m not the one at fault~**

**-One day, the two of us will go see mama, right?**

**-Ehehe. It’s great to be in your body**

“ ... ”

“Yukiko’s sensitive to such things, so please don’t say such strong things. Don’t say anything strange whenever you want to. As-as punishment, brother, today, you must-”

-Kyu.

“Eh-!?”

I can't help but hug Yukiko.

I hug that little body, my cute little sister. I can't let her see my face. I embrace her tightly, with strength.

“Br-brother!?”

“Right. I won't die...never again...”

Don't cry. I can't cry.

“I-I'll always, always be...by your side...”

I promised her, that I won't cry, that I'll continue to live with a smile. I promised.

“Always, always...”

I promised, I already, promised—

“Uuuu-ugh...ku...ahhh...!”

“Brother...”

I just can't stop crying.

That day, I cried for a long time. I let out a cry in this cruel world, in this world where I'm lonely.

The sandglass continues to tick on, the flowers wilt, and the sun sets.

The long dream comes to an end.

Time passes—



**"To Yukiko.**

**I'll be going home after college classes this Friday. Say hi to mom for me.**

**I'll be looking forward to your birthday party.**

**From brother."**

—-Three years passed.

**"Ah."**

On that day, I found something nostalgic.

**"You found this limited rare Hikari! As to be expected of you, partner!  
Bonus points! Five hundred sit-ups!"**

**"At such a place?"**

The piece of paper's in the crease of the gaming console I brought from home. I pick it up, and chuckle to me myself. Hikari Yumesaki left a lot of paper slips for me at the very end. It looks like I've still yet to find them all.

**"You told me to forget about you, but you clearly don't want me to forget about you, huh?"**

I shake the little piece of paper from Hikari Yumesaki, muttering to myself.

—Now then.

It's been three years since the life of two personalities in one body I shared with Hikari Yumesaki ended.

I'm now in my third year of college.

As for what happened after then...what I've been doing after Hikari Yumesaki vanished, the answer's that I tried my hardest to study. To put it straight, I was just running away from reality. After losing the girl I love, I felt really lonely, and to alleviate the loneliness in my heart, I got down to studying, with an anguished heart, to maintain my sanity.

And so, a year or so passed

I didn't know if it's because I spent the time studying hard, but I actually managed to make it to the premier college. Oh great, the power of love really is terrifying. However, it does feel a little inappropriate to say this.

Thus, I'm living alone. I can do whatever I want, but I do feel a little alone. Especially when Yukiko sent me a message saying *"It's time to come home! You never bothered asking Yukiko! It's too late for you to be acting like a brother! Yukiko's not lonely!"* on that day, I suddenly feel like I missed Yukiko's pretty face. Looks like my fear of being alone hasn't changed even at the age of twenty.

"But there are still more of these."

I mutter, and carefully put the folded piece of paper into my drawer.

I thought that there will be a whole bunch of them, but it looks like I didn't manage to find them all. Even after years, there are still pieces of paper showing up suddenly from time to time. Oh great, even in death, she's good at sudden attacks.

And so I think, as I reach for a journal placed on the table.

And then–

“Nothing’s probably written inside.”

These words encapsulate my loneliness.

This is the journal I once used. I know it’s meaningless, but I continue to insist on writing the journal every day.

And only on the left side, the right side blank.

To any bystander, this might be a strange journal. To us however, it’s meaningful. I guess I still have I still have a longing for her.

Will I have a sudden memory loss, and a reply appear on the journal?

Will I suddenly end up dating a girl without knowing it?

Will I again be involved with some ridiculous antics?

Yes, I’m looking forward to it.

So in the end, I didn’t open the journal; i pack my stuff, and prepare to head out to class. After class, I’ll have to head home immediately. Yukiko already sent more than twenty messages, telling me to “hurry back home”. If I don’t hurry up, my inbox is going to be spammed. I hope Yukiko will like her birthday present though.

“Right, time to head out.”

I say to the journal that’s left alone on the table, and leave the room.

Slowly, I walk down the sunny path leading to school.

I pass through the residential area, and arrive at the bustling streets with loads of food shops. All I see are young people living the college life. Ah,

those people with friends sure have it nice. In the end, I'm back to being alone. I really haven't grown at all. Life sure is tough.

"Hey, Sakamoto."

But, it's not like life never changed at all.

"Yo."

Hearing this sudden greeting, I have to stop, and turn my head around.

A girl's running towards me from behind.

"Morning! Looks like you're in a good mood today too, Sakamoto!"

"Enough already. Drank too much at the seminar two days ago, and I'm having a hangover since yesterday—Miyamoto."

I retort back at the girl smiling at me.

Even I too find this to be a real coincidence.

I somehow end up miraculously reunited with my childhood friend and penpal Harumi Miyamoto, and we somehow end up attending the same college. I never told her which college I was headed to, so we just so happened to bump into each other, I was chatted up by her, and was really taken aback. "You got a memorable looking face." So Miyamoto said, but I'll just take that as praise.

"Let's go then! The streets clear up quickly whenever I walk with you. Thanks for the help."

"Don't say this as if I'm a snow plower."

And keep a low profile.

“Ahaha. What’s wrong with that? And you’re my ‘butler’ here. Hurry, gogogo!”

The girl bares her teeth as she laughs out loud. Butler, she remembers that promise, huh?

“Hm? What’s wrong? Why are you looking at me.”

“It-it’s nothing.”

I subconsciously stare at Miyamoto, and she suddenly tilts her head in a cute manner. I don’t really have any thought about it, just that she got prettier. She was cute in my memories, but it just feels like she got prettier ever since she became a college girl. Really, she’s a college girl in her youth. That old headband of hers still suits her.

“But well, you used to slouch a lot, Sakamoto. You’re tall, you should stand up right. Also, don’t frown all the time.”

“What? This isn’t a bad thing, is it? Not like I want anyone else to look at me.”

“Seriously. I give you a rare tip, you know. I thought you got kinder through our letters, but once we meet again, I see that you never changed. Everyone has a bad opinion of you, you know~”

Shut up. This is good. My philosophy is that I don’t have the need to make friends. Also, I still have contact with my friends in high school, so I don’t feel lonely at all. But really, I was anxious when Kasumi figured out my address before I could tell her.

“Speaking of which, aren’t you the same?”

“Hm? What about me?”

I guess that's it. You seem like a posh, refined lady through the letters, but it's like I found that you're exactly the same as before. What happened to the crazy personality of yours in your letters.

"Ah, that?"

This feisty Miyamoto suddenly lets out a rare falter.

And then, she gives a bashful look, saying,

"...You still remember the first time we met at the campsite, right?"

"Hm? Yeah."

It's impossible to forget about that. That day was the first time she and I—

"There's a girl hugging a panda doll back then, you remember?"

Miyamoto mentions Hikari Yumesaki before I can recall her appearance. This really surprises me.

"You actually like her, don't you?"

"...!"

The unexpected words come one after another, and I choose silence. I guess my attitude left Miyamoto mistaken about it, and she continues on, her face a little red,

"Back then, I kept looking at you, and when you saw that she couldn't cross the river, you wanted to help her, and made a fool of yourself. You failed, but back then, when this young me saw that scene, I was thinking that you had such feelings for her. So I tried changing my image in the letter. But this can only be done in the letters."

"...I see."

Hikari Yumesaki, looks like you impact in ways we don't know of. Seriously, there are legends of you everywhere."

"What happened to that girl?"

"...Who knows."

Basking in the breeze, I answer in a forlorn manner.

I guess it's probably a coincidence, but my heart still rattles whenever I find Hikari Yumesaki notes, and then hear people mention her on the day itself. Yep, those days aren't just dreams. No matter how much time has passed, even if they start to fade, she did...live on this world before. As my other half—

"Hm?"

While the atmosphere got silent.

My cellphone rang, notifying me.

"Ah."

I have a look at the sender, and can't help but gasp.

"—Chiaki."

"Hm, what's the matter? Your girlfriend?"

I evade Miyamoto's stare, telling her that's not the case, and then look at the message from the girl—who shared the same tragic fate as us.

**"Good morning. Are you still alright? Today is the third anniversary of Hayato's disappearance. Do you want to come along and clean his grave?"**

"...Chiaki."

Seeing this somewhat lonely message, I can't help but look up at the sky. Yeah, it's been so long—

A month after Hikari Yumesaki vanished from my body, Hayato too met his demise, and left this world. He kept smiling until the very end, never complaining at all, continuing to live on as Chiaki's hero, and vanished. He's a strong one, so strong that I feel that I'll never be able to surpass him in this life.

His life is definitely not meaningless.

Chiaki's probably motivated by that vigorous lifestyle of Hayato, and ever since then, her growth has been outstanding. After much enthusiastic practice, Chiaki now can move around the vicinity of her house without the assistance of a wheelchair. Not alone that, but the biggest change that happened to her is—

**“Also, have you found any clues as to how to revive Hayato and Miss Hikari?”**

Seeing the last bit, I can't help but smile.

Right—even at this point. Chiaki hasn't given up on Hayato.

The girl who despaired over the cruel future no longer exists. She swore before Hayato's grave that she'll definitely be reunited with him again, and never to give up. She knows that it's a tough road full of obstacles, and yet she decides to continue on. She wipes her tears, determined as she looks forward. She's greatly different from this me who cried, a reliable person.

“What's the matter? You've been smiling for a while now.”

“Eh? Ah, sorry. It's nothing.”



While I lose myself as I look at the message, Miyamoto stares at my face, looking unhappy. Sorry, sorry. So I apologize twice before talking things through.

**“Nothing of yet, but I won’t give up. I’ll go over to you this Sunday, until then.”** I give Chiaki this reply, and slip the phone into my pocket. Right, I don’t intend to give up either.

As long as we’re still alive, there’s still a possibility. Then, let’s continue to struggle until the very end. This is the job of those still alive. I’m going to fulfill the promise that was yet to be fulfilled.

To meet Madam Hinako—with her.

“Surely—we’ll be together.”

“Hm? Really, what’s with you?”

I chuckle at a mystified Miyamoto, wave it off, and again look at the sky.

The blue, tall sky.

I’m sure that she’ll be at some place under this blue sky, I believe that one day, we’ll reunite under the blue sky.

I silently call out her name, in a voice nobody else can hear.

“Seriously! Pull yourself together! Look, we’re going to me late!”

I feel a sense of nostalgia in my heart, and Miyamoto slaps my back hard. Yeah yeah, I’m sorry. Let’s go to college.

With Miyamoto prompting me, we head off to school.

“I’m back!”

It's after school, and after school, I head back to my apartment before heading for home. Time to clean up my room.

I prepare my bag, change the birthday present I bought for Yukiko last week. Think, there's—

“Ah?”

While I'm packing up.

There's a little piece of paper between the gaps of the computer box. Ah, two rare strikes today—I open the box, and take out the piece of paper. It's what I expected.

**“Hikari shows up when you're feeling lonely, Sakamoto! You're too careless!”**

“They're really everywhere.”

How many did she hide? She has no restraint, that fellow.”

I have a look at the note from Hikari Yumesaki, smile, and carefully put it into the table. After some silence, I pick up my bag, and is about to leave.

“Right. I closed the window too.”

Just when I opened the door leading to the corridor.

While the dazzling sunlight's shining in through the gap, stinging at my eyes.

I—realize something.

“Huh——”

Eh? That one...

Where did that piece come from? I remember it's tucked in the computer I brought from home. It's not strange to have pieces of paper inside there.

Then, the content?

I did say, when I was in high school, that I want to live alone once I get to college. So even if she did predict this before she vanish, it's not surprising.

But, what if—

“ — ”

I start to slowly return home.

For some reason, there's a smile on my face.

But I know why.

Surely there's something changing. I have this feeling.

I pick up the journal on the table.

My—our exchange diary.

My exchange diary, and hers.

I believe there's definitely something written on it—



# AFTERWORD

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The last time, I said I wanted to reveal the behind the scenes, but I didn't, so this time, I want to complete the challenge.

This time, I want to talk about the book spine.

I'm sure everyone knows that every author at Dengeki Bunko has different colors for their spines. Also, everyone should know the spine color of Maru Fuji's books. This time, I'm going to talk about how this color was decided.

It all happened on a very cold day...

Editor-in-charge: *"What color do you want for the book spine?"*

Maru Fuji: "Erm, this kind of color, I guess." (The color of the attachment in the email.

Editor-in-charge: *"Hm. But it seems that red suits Maru Fuji."*

Maru Fuji: "Ah, yes (why bother asking me...)"

That's all.

This thing about the spine is that it's decided in such an unreason...ahem...surprising manner, but in fact, Maru Fuji does like this color. Red is eyecatching! Whenever I just so happen to see the spine, I'll really think, 'good thing I didn't get to choose my color'.

Well, leaving this unimportant thing aside, I have something I have to report to everyone.

Actually, once this volume's done, the series 'Tomorrow I will die, you will revive' shall end.

A lazy person like me's able to write three volumes. Thinking about it, it's all thanks to the warm-hearted letters from the readers. I really want to give my sincere thanks to every reader.

And just to note, Maru Fuji's next work has been decided. The editor-in-charge has been encouraging me, "I won't be letting you rest (laugh)", so I guess the new work should be announced, unexpectedly soon.

And so, everyone. The recent 'unreasonable red' (named Maru Fuji) should have a new work on the bookshelves. It should be enough for me if there's someone who can recognize it "Ah, that author has a new work?". I hope everyone can continue to support my new work. I'll try my best to write, and make sure that everyone won't regret buying it, surely.

And so, this is where it ends.

**"Tomorrow I will die. You will revive."**

Thank you everyone for reading until the very end.

Maru Fuji